

No 113

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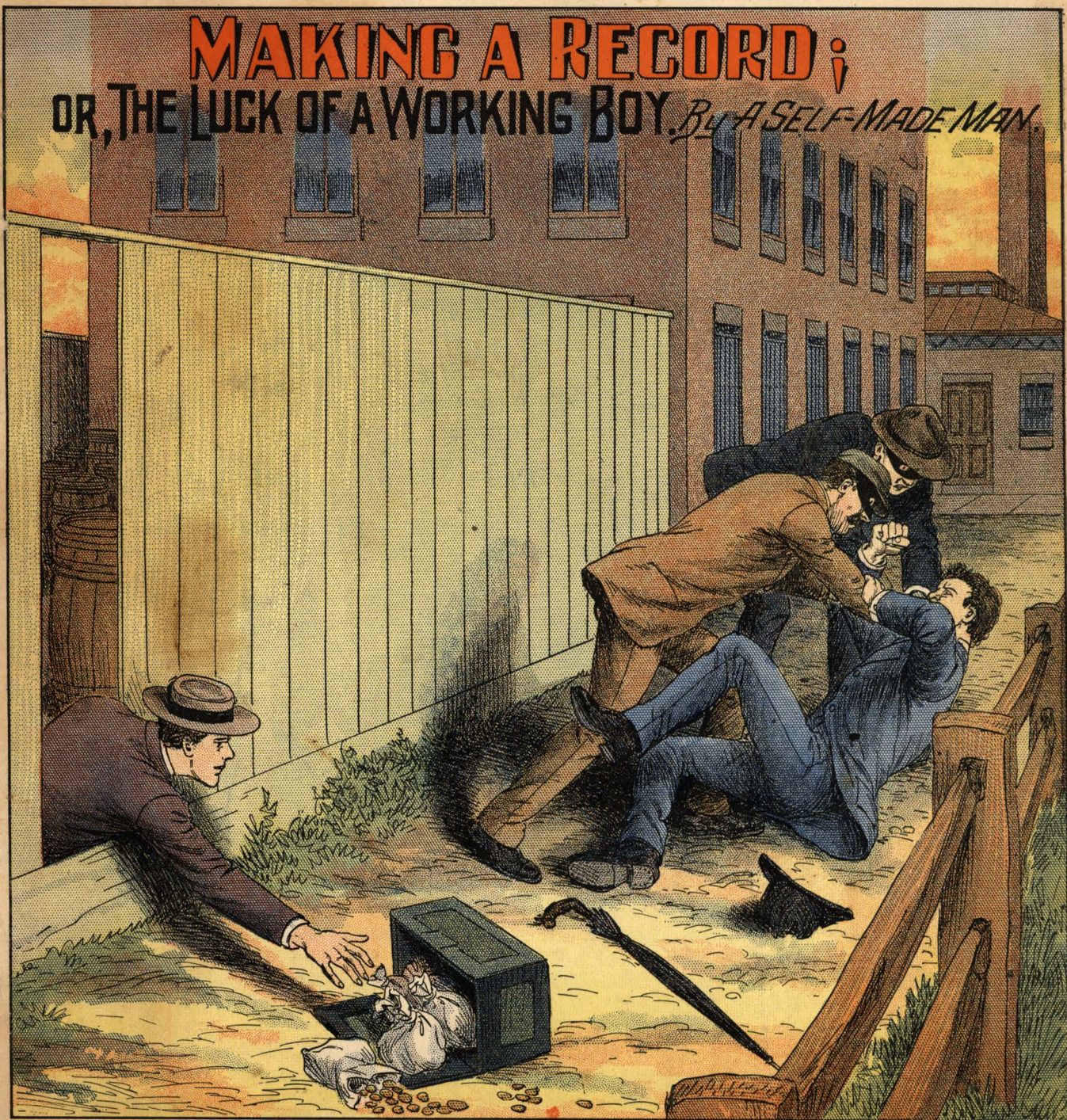
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AND

FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

MAKING A RECORD;
OR, THE LUCK OF A WORKING BOY. *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*



Cautiously the boy thrust his head through the hole in the fence. He was astonished to see Craig on the ground struggling with two masked men. The cashbox lay close by. With a thrill of satisfaction Bob reached for it.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1907, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 24 Union Square, New York.

No. 113.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 29, 1907.

PRICE 5 CENTS.

Making a Record

OR,

THE PLUCK OF A WORKING BOY

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH BOB BARRON IS UP AGAINST IT.

"Bob Barron!"

Andrew Craig, cashier and managing clerk for David Waters, manufacturer of canned goods in the bustling Western town of Millgate, stood in the doorway of the shipping department and roared out the words in a furious tone of voice.

He seemed to be angry clear through, for his black eyes snapped fire as he glared at the bright, good-looking boy who was stenciling a name and address on half a dozen cases that stood ready for the truckman to carry to the freight yard near by.

"Yes, sir," replied Bob, pausing in his work, brush in one hand and a stencil letter in the other, and looking up.

"This thing has got to be stopped, do you understand?" cried Craig, waving a telegraph blank in the air.

"What thing, sir?" asked the boy, in surprise.

"You've made another blunder."

"Another blunder!" ejaculated Bob, with a startled look.

"Yes; another blunder. You shipped a lot of canned corn to a customer who ordered deviled ham, and of course the man who ordered the corn has received the ham, so we may expect to hear from him at any moment."

"I don't see how that could have happened, sir. I am very particular in making the shipments," replied the boy, putting down the stencil and replacing the brush in the pot filled with a black liquid.

"Of course you don't see how it happened," sneered the

managing clerk; "but it happened, just the same, and you are responsible for the blunder. I shall, of course, have to report this to Mr. Waters as soon as he gets back from Lakeview. We may lose two customers through your carelessness. As Mr. Waters had a whole lot of trouble trying to square himself with Meredith & Co. over the blunder you made two weeks ago, I'm thinking that you'll be lucky if you don't get your walking papers for this."

There was a gleam of satisfaction in the cashier's eyes that he could not wholly conceal, as if he rejoiced over the prospect of the boy getting bounced, and Bob's quick eye noticed it.

He and Craig had never been on good terms, especially since Bob discovered a big error in a shipping order handed to him by the managing clerk and pointed it out to him.

Had he not noticed the mistake on that occasion the house would have suffered a big loss and Craig himself would have been in hot water.

Instead of being grateful to the boy, the cashier resented his smartness in finding him guilty of a piece of carelessness, of which he was ashamed, and from that moment he determined, by hook or by crook, to get Bob discharged.

With this purpose in view he managed to have Bob's assistant transferred to another department, and secured the place of assistant shipping clerk for his nephew, Noel Shattuck, a freckle-faced, red-headed, disagreeable boy, with whom Bob found it hard to get along.

Bob being boss of the shipping department, Noel had to take his orders from him, and from the first he did it in a surly, half-defiant way that made the shipping clerk feel like kicking him.

He had to remonstrate with Shattuck continually for the errors he made, and because he could not trust his assistant, Bob found that he had a lot more work on his shoulders than he had when Billy Davis was his side partner.

Bob was always particularly careful to see that all shipments went out of the place correctly addressed, both as to name and destination, especially in the case of a rush order, of which the house had many each week.

He gave watchful attention to even the smallest detail in connection with his department, and the result was that Mr. Waters rarely received any kind of a complaint reflecting upon his young shipping clerk.

Consequently, he had come to regard Bob as one of his most valuable employees.

The first trouble came soon after Noel Shattuck became his assistant.

It was part of Noel's duty to assist Bob in marking the cases to be shipped.

He did it in such a slipshod way that Bob had to call him down repeatedly.

Noel didn't like his superior anyway, and this naturally increased his dislike for the smart boy in charge of the department.

When Bob received one or a batch of shipping directions the first thing he did was to copy them off in his shipping receipt book in duplicate.

The original he retained in the stub, while the duplicate went to the freight clerk of the railroad company with the goods.

Noel or himself used the duplicates when addressing the cases, and Bob always compared the lettering on the boxes with the name and address on the shipping blank to make sure they were identical before he handed the goods over to the truckman.

Two weeks since Bob shipped an important rush order to Meredith & Co., wholesale grocers in a neighboring city.

Within a couple of days Mr. Waters received a big kick from the firm in question because the goods had not arrived.

The complaint was turned over to Craig for investigation.

He looked up the matter in Bob's shipping book and discovered that the boy had, according to the evidence, shipped the goods to Toledo, Ohio, instead of Cleveland, in the same State.

That's the way the stub read, and the duplicate on file with the freight agent coincided.

Bob looked long and hard at his handwriting, which struck him as having a suspicious dissimilarity with his customary pot-hooks, but as he was the only one who used the book he found himself up against it, and had to accept the blame.

He could not understand how he came to make the blunder, for he had shipped so many cases to Meredith & Co. since Mr. Waters secured the firm as a regular customer that he knew their address by heart.

It was his first important mistake, and though he felt pretty badly over it, Mr. Waters readily excused it, though he came near losing Meredith & Co. as a customer.

Now, inside of the fortnight, he was accused of a second error, and, if anything, a more serious one.

He remembered the two shipments in question, and, positive that he had made no mistake, he rushed for his ship-

ping book to prove to Mr. Craig that the blame for the matter surely lay in some other quarter.

The managing clerk watched him with a sardonic smile on his lips.

Apparently he didn't believe that the boy would be able to square himself.

Berry & Berry, of Buffalo, N. Y., had ordered the deviled ham; Smith & Co., of Elmira, N. Y., had ordered the corn.

Bob knew that, and he turned to the two stubs, confidently expecting to verify the correctness of his shipments.

To his astonishment and consternation he found the thing reversed, and yet he could swear he had written the orders down correctly.

"Well," sneered Craig, who noted with satisfaction the expression on Bob's face, "I suppose you can prove that the fault lies with the railroad?"

The boy was too staggered by the evidence that confronted him to answer directly.

It seemed to him as if there was some hocus-pocus about the business, and yet he could not go back on his own record, notwithstanding that the same peculiar discrepancy in his handwriting that had appeared at the time of the former error showed itself now.

Still, there was no disputing the fact that he had made the entries in the book before detaching the duplicates.

Furthermore, he had compared the duplicates with the markings made by Shattuck on the two cases and had found them correct.

It was almost the last thing he did before going home on that afternoon, and the cases were carried off first thing next morning.

"There's something wrong here, Mr. Craig," he said, in a bewildered tone. "I can swear that——"

"I've no doubt you'd be willing to swear to anything to crawl out of a hole," replied the managing clerk, sneeringly, walking over to Bob's desk and glancing at the stubs. "But here is the evidence against you in black and white. You can't get away from it, and I reckon there'll be something doing in the morning when Mr. Waters calls for this book and sees that the blunder is due to your carelessness."

"But I know I sent the case of deviled ham to Berry & Berry, and the corn to Smith & Co.," fluttered Bob.

"Oh, you do know it—you are willing to swear to it in spite of the evidence to the contrary in your own handwriting? Then how do you account for Berry & Berry sending us this telegram?" and Craig flashed the yellow document triumphantly under the boy's eyes.

The despatch stated that the case received by Berry & Berry contained canned corn, which they had not ordered, and the firm wanted to know where the deviled ham was that they had ordered, and for which they had duly received the bill by mail.

Bob stared at the telegram blank like one in a dream.

The evidence was certainly piling up against him.

What could he say in the face of such stubborn facts?

And yet he was never more certain of anything in his life than that he had inscribed the orders correctly in his shipping book and had seen them correctly lettered on the two cases.

"That's just the way it was with the other blunder I had to shoulder," he muttered to himself. "I could have sworn then that I sent the Meredith order to Cleveland, where I

know they do business, and yet the evidence showed that I forwarded it to Toledo. Either my brain-pan is beginning to slip a cog, or else there's something crooked going on in this department. It's up to me to find out which, and in mighty short order."

"Well," said the managing clerk, sharply, "what explanation have you to offer?"

"Nothing," replied Bob, shortly, going back to the case he was lettering and resuming his work, for the truckman was waiting for the cases, and Noel was busy in the next room packing some boxes with boned chicken on a hurry order.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH BOB FINDS GROUND FOR HIS SUSPICIONS.

As soon as the truckman drove off with his load Bob went to his desk, and taking the shipping book, turned to the two stubs where the blunder was recorded and began to study the writing attentively.

"That looks like my work, and then again it doesn't. I'm confident that I did not make any mistake in those two shipments, and yet these stubs say I did. Has any one been monkeying with this book? Is so, why? Evidently to get me into trouble. Altering the stubs would of itself not count for much without a similar change being effected in the duplicates and the marking on the cases. Now, who could have done such a thing, if it was done? Noel Shattuck? He does not strike me as being clever enough to carry such a scheme through successfully. It is quite possible that he may be foxier than I have any idea of. One thing is certain—he doesn't like me a little bit. Neither does his uncle, Mr. Craig. This whole thing looks decidedly suspicious to me. There was something in Mr. Craig's manner when he jumped on me awhile ago that struck me as peculiar. He seemed to gloat over the fact that I was caught in a tight place. I have no doubt that he would like to see me discharged. These two blunders I am charged with have happened since Noel Shattuck took Billy Davis' place as my assistant. That looks significant to begin with. I wonder if Mr. Craig had the change made for a purpose, and whether he is working hand in glove with his nephew to get me out? It is not improbable. Let me examine those stubs in the light and see if my writing was erased by means of chemicals. The paper ought to show if it was tampered with."

Bob folded the covers and unused leaves back, and also all the stubs but the first of the two he was about to submit to the reflection of the late afternoon sunlight.

He examined the stub carefully, but there wasn't a single indication that any kind of an erasure had been made.

"It doesn't look—hello!"

The exclamation was caused by the stub suddenly coming away in his fingers.

And it parted from its place in the book without a tear, or even a sign of the binder's stitch holes.

The latter point attracted Bob's attention particularly.

Laying the stub down, he pulled sharply on the second stub.

That came away also, just as cleanly as the other.

He laid the second stub down and pulled on the next, but it wouldn't budge.

He tried every stub back to the one containing the Meredith & Co. entry—the first blunder of which he was accused—and all held fast except that one, which came loose just as the other two did.

"I begin to see a light," mused Bob, scratching his chin. "There has been crooked work here."

Examining the inner end of each of the three stubs, he saw a thin line of dried mucilage on each.

Evidently they had been stuck in to replace the original stubs that had been carefully removed.

Bob turned to the end of the book and easily detected where several sheets had been cut out.

"I think I will be able to make some kind of a defense at any rate, to-morrow morning, when Mr. Waters calls on me for an explanation," said Bob to himself. "This is clearly a conspiracy to do me up. My defense won't be complete unless I can put the guilt of this transaction where it belongs. I wonder how I can reach the plotter or plotters? I believe Noel Shattuck is one, and I am satisfied that he is working under the direction of his uncle. Now, if I could get some proof against either or both I'd be able to turn the tables on them."

Bob reinserted the three stubs in their respective places and laid the book aside until it should be called for.

Noel walked in at that moment to tell his boss that the boxes he had been packing were ready to be marked for shipment.

"All right," replied Bob, and lent him a hand to bring them into the room.

He had the shipping receipt made out and handed it to Shattuck to letter the goods by.

When the six o'clock whistle blew Noel put on his coat and hat and disappeared.

Bob had to remain till the truckman came back for the boxes, which he had been instructed to do.

Mr. Craig and the office force had departed half an hour before, and the hands employed on the four upper floors were leaving in bunches.

Billy Davis, seeing the door of the shipping room open, looked in on his way to the gate.

"Hello, Bob," he grinned, "still at it?"

"Yes. I'm waiting for the truckman. Come in."

Billy entered.

"How are you and Shattuck getting on?" he asked.

"Don't mention it," replied Bob. "He's a lobster."

"Sorry you lost me, aren't you?"

"I should say I am. We hitched all right, Billy. Do you like it as well upstairs?"

"Not for a copper sou. I wish I was back here."

"I wish you were, too. Maybe you will be."

"Think so?" asked Billy, eagerly.

"Come over here, Billy, I want to talk to you."

Billy went over.

"You were transferred, Billy, to make room for Noel Shattuck."

"Tell me something I don't know."

"Mr. Craig wanted his nephew in here and worked the wires with the boss."

"Of course. I tumbled to that. Shattuck, having a pull, and I, having none, the change was easily worked."

"What do you suppose Noel was put in here for?"

"To help you, and work himself up."

"It's my opinion he was put here for another purpose."

"What other purpose?"

"To work me out."

"Go on! How could he? He couldn't hold down your job if he got it, which isn't within reason, for you fill the bill right up to the handle."

"I'm not filling it up to the handle since you left me."

"Why ain't you?"

"Two serious mistakes in the shipment of orders have happened within two weeks."

"No!" cried Billy, in surprise.

"Yes. The first occurred thirteen days ago. Six cases of assorted canned goods for Meredith & Co., of Cleveland, went astray and there was the dickens to pay, as it was a rush order."

"Fault of the railroad, of course," said Billy. "How could you be blamed for that?"

"It wasn't the fault of the railroad."

"Then how did they happen to go astray?"

"The cases were directed to Toledo instead of Cleveland."

"How could that happen? You and me shipped enough goods to Meredith & Co. to know their address with our eyes shut."

"That's right; but, nevertheless, the cases were billed and marked Toledo, and were recovered at the freight depot in that city."

"Shattuck's fault."

"If it was, who is responsible for Shattuck? Who was responsible for your acts when you were in the shipping room?"

"You were," replied Billy, promptly.

"Exactly; and you noticed that nothing went out of here until I had given it a look over."

"Keyrect."

"We pulled together for more than a year and we never heard of a kick from the trade."

"Not a kick," nodded Billy.

"If I had to watch, in a general way, the work of an experienced young chap like you, who seldom made a slip, I naturally had to keep a sharper oversight on a new assistant like Shattuck, who might be expected to make many errors until he got the run of things. Isn't that right?"

"Sure."

"Then I ought to have caught any mistake such as the marking of a well-known firm like Meredith & Co. to Toledo instead of to Cleveland, don't you think?"

"I should smile."

"The evidence shows not only that I didn't, but that I billed the goods to Toledo myself."

"Get out!"

"Look here."

Bob picked up the shipping book and turned to the stub containing the entry of Meredith & Co.

"What does that say?" he asked.

Billy read and gasped.

"You must have been thinking of something else when you wrote that!" he said.

"I never think of anything but what I am doing at the moment."

"Then how did you do it?"

"I didn't."

"Why, isn't that your writing?"

"It's a good imitation, isn't it?"

"Do you mean that Shattuck wrote that?"

"I don't know who wrote it, but I didn't."

"Isn't it your business to know?"

"It is, and that's why I got it in the neck. The goods went wrong. This entry held me responsible. I had no defense. In fact, I couldn't understand how the thing occurred, so it went against me as a black mark."

"But if you were positive that you didn't write it——"

"I wasn't so positive then as I am now."

"Why are you more positive now?"

"Because a double blunder of the same kind has just happened."

"A double blunder!" cried Billy, with open mouth.

"Yes. What does that say?" asked Bob, pulling a couple of orders off his file and showing them one at a time to Davis.

"Four gross deviled ham—Berry & Berry, Buffalo. Two gross sweet corn, Sunrise brand—Smith & Co., Elmira. Well?"

"That's plain enough, isn't it?"

"As the nose on your face," admitted Billy.

Bob turned up the two stubs in the shipping book.

"What does that say?"

Billy whistled.

"Did you actually mix those orders up? It isn't your way of doing things."

"Somebody mixed them up for me."

"Who? Shattuck?"

"Possibly. I'd give something to know the truth. I didn't fill in either of those stubs."

"Who did? Must have been Shattuck."

"That's where the mystery comes in. You never made any entries in the shipping book."

"Nary a one. That was your business."

"Shattuck has no more right to do it than you. I made the original entries in the three cases in question, just as I did in all the others."

"Then how is it that——"

"I repudiate these three stubs? Because the original stubs were removed and these substituted in their places. Because there's crooked work going on in here under my very nose, and the object of it is to secure my discharge. There, you have the whole thing in a nutshell."

"You don't say!" gasped Billy, gazing at Bob in great astonishment.

CHAPTER III.

WORKING UP A CASE.

"I am sorry to say that I do say so," replied Bob, with a sober face.

"Say, how could the original stubs be removed and these put in their places?"

Bob showed him.

"Where did the duplicates come from?"

"The back of the book," and Bob showed him the evidence of missing sheets.

"But how could such a game be worked under your eye?"

"It wasn't. It was done in each case at night. In both instances the shipment, after I had checked off the marking on the cases, lay over all night waiting for the truckman.

Having no suspicion of foul play I did not consider it necessary to look at them again."

"Well, if this doesn't beat the band," ejaculated Billy. "What are you going to do? Report the matter to Mr. Waters?"

"Certainly."

"You ought to see the night watchman. If Noel Shattuck had a hand in the business the watchman must have let him in to the shipping room."

"I'm going to ask him, but I don't believe he let Noel in at the gate. It is my opinion that if he helped in this scheme he came in at the front door with Mr. Craig, who has a key to the door, for he often comes here at night to pull up on his work."

"But the watchman would know if there was any work going on in this room."

"I dare say he would, if Mr. Craig didn't send him on an errand to keep him away from the premises for an hour or so. As soon as he went off Shattuck could have slipped in, attended to his part of the job under the cashier's eye, and then slipped away before the watchman got back."

"That's so," said Billy. "At any rate the watchman will tell you whether he was absent for a while or not any night."

"Yes. If he was, that will tend to confirm my deduction."

"It won't prove anything, though."

"No."

"If the originals and duplicates had only been numbered consecutively by a machine before they were bound up it would have been impossible for such a scheme to be put through without special printing, and that would have cost something."

"That's true; but shipping receipts are not usually numbered that way if numbered at all."

"If you are sure that the addresses on the cases were right when you examined them, the stenciling would show evidence of having been erased for re-marking."

"Of course. I mean to telegraph Berry & Berry, and Smith & Co. on my own hook in the morning for information on that head," said Bob. "Their replies ought to help my statement when I come to make it to Mr. Waters."

"I suppose the original stubs and duplicates were destroyed when the changes were made."

"Naturally. It wouldn't do for them to crop up at an awkward moment."

"If Shattuck did the job he might have hid them somewhere about this room. Why don't you hunt for them on a chance? I'll help you. There are lots of corners where such things could be shoved out of sight."

Bob thought Billy's suggestion a good one to follow out, so the two boys began a careful search of the shipping room.

They hunted for some time without success, until Billy shoved his hand into a big knothole in the floor in one corner.

He felt something like crumpled paper, grasped it and pulled it out.

It proved to be two of the stubs and duplicates they were after.

He gave a shout of glee.

"Here's two of them, Bob. Maybe the other is here, too."

It was, for he pulled it out on the second trial.

Bob was delighted as he smoothed them out on his desk.

"We are getting at the bottom of this conspiracy by degrees," he said. "They prove that I made no error in either case."

"That's what they do," said Billy. "Now, if you could only prove that Shattuck is the guilty rooster you'd be all right."

"I may be able to do that. Do you see that mark?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"What does it look like?"

"The print of a thumb."

"That's right. It's a well-known fact in police annals that no two thumbs are ever alike. Detectives have used that knowledge often to track down criminals from thumb marks imprinted on various objects at the scene of a crime. I will call the attention of Mr. Waters to this mark and suggest that he get an impression of Noel's thumb. Then, if he cannot satisfy himself as to the identity of the two marks by comparison, he can submit them to the judgment of an experienced detective."

"Gee! That's a good idea. You may catch Shattuck by that plan."

"I hope so. My chief object is to clear myself of these blunders, and my next is to get rid of Noel and have you put back as my assistant."

"That will suit me down to the ground," replied Billy.

At this juncture the truckman entered the room, and Billy helped to load the boxes on his truck.

As soon as the last was out of the building, Bob locked up and then, accompanied by Billy, hunted up the night watchman to let him know they were going, and also to ask him a few questions.

As the watchman went with them to the gate, Bob said:

"Mr. Brown, did Mr. Craig come to the office any night this week?"

"Yes, on Monday night."

"Was his nephew, Noel Shattuck, with him?"

The watchman shook his head.

"Did Mr. Craig send you on an errand that night?"

"Why, yes. Soon after he arrived he called me into the office, told me that he had forgotten an important account book he had taken to his house, and sent me for it."

"How long were you away from here?"

"About an hour and a half. Why do you ask?"

"I just wanted to know, because I have reason to believe that some one was doing something in the shipping room one night this week, and I thought you would have called my attention to the fact if you had known about it. You didn't see a light in the shipping room on Monday night when you returned with the book?"

"No. There has been no one in the shipping room at night at any time to my knowledge," replied the watchman.

"Thank you. Good-night," and Bob, with Billy, walked out at the gate and made their way homeward. "Well," he said to his companion, "you see the watchman was away from the premises an hour and a half on Monday night, and that was the night that the cases directed to Berry & Berry, and Smith & Co., lay overnight in the shipping room."

"That seems to show that the cashier stood in with Shattuck on the job. You ought to be able to show them both up."

"The mere fact that Mr. Craig sent the watchman away on an apparently innocent errand doesn't prove anything against him. Nor is there any evidence to show that Noel Shattuck was in the shipping room that night. If they were questioned by Mr. Waters, Noel would swear he wasn't here, and his uncle would back him up."

"I guess that's right," replied Billy. "But I'll tell you how you might get a pointer on the subject."

"How?"

"Let's go around to the station house and find out what policeman was on the beat that evening. Then hunt him up and ask him if he saw a light in the shipping room Monday night. If he did he might have seen Shattuck in there."

"That's a good idea, Billy. We'll carry it out."

They went to the station house and Bob put his inquiry to the officer in charge.

He called the roundsman in question out of an inner room, where he was getting ready to go on post.

"I suppose you pass the Waters canned goods establishment several times of a night?" asked Bob.

"Yes. It's on my beat."

"Do you ever walk up the alley or lane where the fence is?"

"I do to try the gate."

"Do you remember what time you went up there Monday night?"

"About nine o'clock."

"Was there a light in the office at that time?"

"Yes. The cashier was working at his books."

"You know Mr. Craig by sight, then?"

"Sure, I do."

"Did you see a light in any other part of the building at that time?"

"Yes. There was a light in a back room overlooking the alley. There was a boy in there lettering a couple of cases."

"You are certain of that?" asked Bob, eagerly.

"Yes," replied the policeman, looking at him rather sharply.

"Thank you. That is all I want to know. By the way, what is your name?"

"John Quigley."

"Much obliged. Here's a quarter to treat yourself to some cigars."

"One moment, young fellow," said the officer, as he took the money. "What is your object in asking me all these questions?"

"I am the shipping clerk of the Waters canned goods house. I wanted to find out if there was anybody working in my department on Monday night, that's all. The boy you saw in the room is my assistant. I simply wanted to get a line on his movements Monday night."

The policeman seemed to be satisfied, and the two boys walked out of the station.

"Billy," said Bob, enthusiastically, "you're a brick. You've got a long head. The evidence of Policeman Quigley is just what I needed to make out a case against Shattuck. He had no business lettering cases, or doing anything else in the shipping room on Monday night. I fancy I've got him dead to rights."

"Bet your boots you have," chuckled Billy, as they walked up the street.

CHAPTER IV.

BOB TURNS THE TABLES ON HIS ENEMIES.

Bob parted company with Billy Davis about two blocks from his own home, where he lived with his widowed mother and an elder sister, who carried on a millinery store.

His father had been a master carpenter, and until his death the family was well provided for, and Bob was able to attend the Grammar School regularly.

He had been one term in the High School when his father died, then it became necessary for him to get out and hustle.

He went to work in the canned goods house as assistant shipping clerk, and did so well that when the head of the department left to accept a better position elsewhere, he was promoted to his place, and Billy Davis was hired to fill the post of his helper.

His sister, in the meanwhile, opened up in the millinery business for herself, and now the family was getting along quite comfortably once more.

"You're late to-night, Bob," said his mother, when the boy walked into the house and kissed her, as was his custom. "I suppose you were detained at your business."

"A little while. After that I put in about twenty minutes doing a bit of detective business."

"For Mr. Waters?"

"No, for myself."

"For yourself?" said his mother, in some surprise.

"Yes. There's been some crooked business going on in my department, and it was necessary for me to get to the bottom of it or the blame would rest on my shoulders."

"How did you succeed?"

"First rate. I fancy my new assistant will get the bounce to-morrow and that my friend Billy will get his old job back."

"You have never seemed to be satisfied with your new helper."

"No. I've now caught him in a dirty trick to do me up, and when I bring the matter to Mr. Waters' attention in the morning I expect to get rid of him for good and all."

"But he's a relative of the head clerk, isn't he?"

"Yes. A nephew. But that fact won't save him. Mr. Waters won't stand for crooked work in his establishment."

"Well, your supper is ready. Sit up to the table. Bessie has been home, had hers, and went back to the store."

So Bob, with sharpened appetite, sat down and made short work of his supper.

Next morning, on his way to work, Bob sent off the telegrams to Berry & Berry, of Buffalo, and Smith & Co., of Elmira, requesting an immediate answer, to be addressed to himself.

He was always among the first of the employees to report to the time-keeper in the morning at the gate, and this morning was no exception.

Noel Shattuck came swaggering in shortly afterward.

"Here's an order for you to begin on, Shattuck," said Bob. "Three gross potted tongue; one gross Lima beans; one-half gross desiccated chicken; ditto boned turkey. Then into the same case you want to put the eight dozen assorted plum pudding and four dozen mincemeat that were

delivered here yesterday afternoon. You'll find them in that small box near the door. You might as well take this order for Sunrise corn, six gross, at the same time. That will keep you busy for a while."

"One would think you were the boss of this establishment by the way you order me about," replied Shattuck, sulkily.

"I'm boss of this room, and that's all that need worry you," replied Bob, sharply.

"You won't be boss long, I hope," muttered Noel, as he walked into the packing room.

"He's a disagreeable little beast," said Bob to himself, as he started to make out the shipping receipts for the two orders he had given Shattuck.

Soon after Craig entered the room with a batch of orders that had come by the early mail.

"Here, fill these, Barron," he said, in no friendly tone. "See that you don't make any more mistakes. How do you expect to square yourself about the Berry & Berry and the Smith & Co. blunders? We haven't heard from Smith yet, but I dare say there'll be a letter, raising Cain with us, in the next mail."

"I'm not worrying about the matter, Mr. Craig," replied Bob, coolly.

The managing clerk regarded Bob with surprise and not a little anger.

"I suppose you think Mr. Waters will overlook it like he did your Meredith & Co. error?" he snorted, wrathfully. "You'll find yourself mistaken, I'm thinking."

"I shall try to prove to Mr. Waters that I'm not to blame in the matter."

"How are you going to do it?" asked the cashier, curiously.

"I think I shall be able to do it."

"How?"

"I haven't got all my evidence together yet, sir," replied Bob, evasively.

"Humph! I think the evidence is all against you," sneered Craig. "The entries in your shipping book are enough to prove your carelessness."

"I hope to show that the receipts I made out are all right."

"All right!" roared the managing clerk. "How can they be all right when they're all wrong?"

At that moment one of the clerks came in and told Bob that there was a messenger boy outside with a telegram for him on which there was sixty cents to collect.

"All right," said Bob, following him out.

He paid the charges, tore open the envelope and read the message.

It came from Berry & Berry, and was perfectly satisfactory.

When he returned to the shipping room Craig was in the packing room talking to his nephew.

In a few minutes he returned to the counting room.

At eleven o'clock Bob received a C. O. D. message from Smith & Co., which was also satisfactory.

Mr. Waters did not appear till half-past eleven.

By that time Craig had received a letter of complaint from Smith & Co.

Armed with that, and the Berry telegram, he marched into the private office to make matters hot for Bob.

His report surprised and displeased Mr. Waters, who sent at once for Bob.

The young shipping clerk immediately responded.

As he passed the managing clerk's desk that individual favored him with a sardonic look that meant a whole lot.

"Well, Bob," said Mr. Waters, gravely, "I have received a bad report about you from Mr. Craig. It seems you have made another serious blunder in the shipment of our goods. I hope you may be able to clear yourself."

"I am satisfied that I can, sir."

"Very well. Sit down and let me have your explanation."

Bob had brought the shipping book, the original orders from the two firms, and his own evidence, witnesses excepted.

"I am going to prove to you that not only I have made no error in the cases in question, but that the Meredith & Co. matter was not my fault, either," he said.

"I think your shipping book showed conclusively that you sent the Meredith order to Toledo instead of to Cleveland," replied the head of the house.

"It did, sir. And the shipping book will also show that I forwarded the Berry & Berry order and the Smith & Co. order wrong, too."

"Then how do you expect to clear yourself?" asked the merchant, severely.

"By proving that, in the three instances in question, the shipping book lies."

"Indeed. And if the shipping book lies, as you say, who is responsible for that? I believe the book is in your sole charge; that no one but you makes any entries in it."

"No one but me has any right to make any entries in it, but I have evidence to show that the book has been tampered with."

"Tampered with?" exclaimed Mr. Waters, in some astonishment. "Who should tamper with it?"

"An enemy. I have two in this building. But if you will permit me to tell my story I think I can satisfy you of the truth of my assertion."

"Go on."

Bob lost no time in laying the facts before his employer, which he backed up with the original sheets of the shipping book found by Billy Davis in the hole in the floor, and by the two telegrams he had received from Buffalo and Elmira.

He also showed how the false stubs had been gummed in the book.

Then he repeated what Policeman Quigley told him in Billy's presence.

When he got through the matter wore a very serious aspect to Mr. Waters.

He called a clerk in and told him to send for Billy Davis.

Billy, when he arrived, corroborated the points in which he was involved.

Mr. Waters then sent for Noel Shattuck.

"Did you return here Monday evening and do some work in the shipping room?" he asked that youth, when he appeared.

Noel looked startled, but promptly denied that he had been in the building on Monday night, or any other evening since he had come to work there.

Craig then received a summons to step into the private office.

"Mr. Craig," said Mr. Waters, "I believe you returned to the office Monday evening to do some work?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was your nephew here, also?"

The managing clerk flashed a swift look at Noel before replying, then he said, with emphasis, "No."

"What have you done about those two cases—the deviled ham and the corn?"

"I telegraphed both houses to reship them to each other at our expense."

"Quite right. That is all. You and Shattuck may retire; you, too, Bob."

Craig looked at Bob as he passed through the counting room, and he did not like the confident look on his face.

He stopped his nephew.

"What did the old man want with you?" he asked him.

"He asked me if I came back here Monday night and did anything in the shipping room."

"He did?" said the cashier, a bit startled.

"Yes."

"And what did you say?" asked his uncle, anxiously.

"I said no, of course. What else should I say?"

"That's right. See that you stick to it if he should ask you again."

"Of course I will."

After Noel went back to the shipping room Craig did a lot of hard thinking.

"Who the deuce could have given the boss a hint that Noel was here Monday night? Can it be that Barron has a suspicion of the real facts and told Mr. Waters? Pshaw! What of it? Suspicion amounts to nothing. I took care to get the watchman out of the way long enough for Noel to do the trick, so it is impossible for Barron to prove that he was here, no matter what he suspects. I didn't like his look when he left the private office. He didn't seem to be the least cast down. Mr. Waters must have let him down easy again. I can't understand what he sees in that chap. Well, if he's escaped this time, Noel and I must lie low for a while and try again in the near future."

With that reflection he returned to his work.

Mr. Waters remained unusually late at the office that afternoon.

In fact, he stayed until the six o'clock whistle blew.

Then he sent for the night watchman and had a brief talk with him, after which he put on his hat and coat and went to the station house, where he asked for Policeman Quigley.

He had a talk with Quigley and then went home.

Next day at four o'clock the policeman called at the establishment and asked for him.

He was shown into the private office, and then Mr. Waters sent for Shattuck.

"Is this the lad you saw in the shipping room Monday night?" he asked Quigley, when Noel appeared.

The officer said it was, and Noel turned a sickly white.

"I thought you told me that you were not in the building Monday night," said the merchant, sternly, turning on the boy.

Noel was silent.

"You were here, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir," quavered the unhappy youth.

"Why did you deny the fact, then, yesterday morning?"

"I thought you might be angry with me for being here."

"Indeed. What were you doing in the shipping room?"

"Amusing myself."

"In what way?"

"Reading."

"What was he doing, officer?"

"He seemed to be marking cases, with stencil letters and a brush."

"Is that what you were doing?" asked the merchant of Noel.

"No, sir; I was only making believe."

The merchant stepped to the door and called Craig in.

"You told me yesterday that your nephew was not here Monday night. This policeman, whose beat is in this neighborhood, saw Shattuck in the shipping room Monday night marking cases. Do you mean to tell me that you did not know he was there?"

Craig was in an embarrassing predicament.

He did not know what to say.

Finally he reluctantly admitted that he did know that his nephew was in the building.

"Then, why did you deny it when I asked you the question yesterday?" asked Mr. Waters.

Craig tried to shuffle out by giving an evasive answer.

"I am very much obliged to you for your evidence, officer. That will be all," said the merchant.

He handed Quigley a \$5 bill, and the policeman departed.

Mr. Waters then told a clerk to request Bob to bring the shipping book into his private office.

Bob presently appeared with it.

"Now, please repeat the story you told me yesterday morning and show the exhibits in the case, Bob," said the merchant.

Bob obeyed, and before he was half done Craig and his nephew were both in a state of consternation.

"You accuse Shattuck of this trick, I believe, and my head clerk in aiding and abetting him?"

"Yes, sir."

"It's a lie!" hissed Craig.

"I think the evidence, both circumstantial and direct, is sufficient to warrant a grave suspicion of the truth of Bob's charges. At any rate, you will pay your nephew his week's wages and dismiss him at once. Perhaps I will have something more to say to you on the subject later on. You may go back to your desk. Bob, send upstairs for your former assistant, Davis, and put him to work. That is all."

Craig waylaid Bob on his way out.

"It is evident that you're the old man's favorite, and have lied your way out of trouble. But I'll get square with you for this, mark my words!" he hissed.

Bob gave him a glance of contempt and passed on without saying a word.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROBBERY OF THE SAFE AND ITS COMPLICATIONS.

"This is like old times, Bob," said Billy, as the shipping clerk handed him an order to pack a case with Sunrise corn. "So Shattuck got the bounce?"

"He got it straight from the shoulder, and it served him right," replied Bob.

"I should say so, after what he did. Did the boss say anything to the cashier?"

"He said he would have something to say to him later on."

"Then he's liable to get it in the neck, too."

"He's got a bad showing up as it is. Mr. Waters believes that he was aiming to get me discharged."

"Well, I'm glad that you got the better of those two. It was a low down trick that they tried to work on you, and they came mighty near putting you in the soup."

"That's right, Billy. Now, get a move on. That little rascal put me behind in my work. See if you can't help me to pull up."

"I'll help you, bet your boots," said Billy, as he started for his old stamping-ground—the packing room.

As the orders came rushing in the boys had all they could do the next few days to hold their own.

On Saturday afternoon the establishment closed down at five o'clock.

Bob and Billy had to work an hour later to get some orders away that night.

As the office help were putting on their coats to depart one of the junior clerks came out into the shipping room and told Bob that Craig had resigned his job and wouldn't be at the office any more.

"Is that so?" replied Bob. "I can't say that I feel bad over it. He wasn't a friend of mine—quite the other way."

Bob and Billy quit at six and went home.

Bob had hardly parted from his assistant before he recollected that he had left his pay envelope on his desk in the shipping room.

"Gracious! I'll have to go back for it," he exclaimed. "I don't believe anybody is likely to get at it but the night watchman, and I'm sure he wouldn't touch it, but still I need the money in a way, and a fellow doesn't feel too happy with his week's wages lying around loose."

So he turned about and hastened back to the canning establishment.

He took a short cut that brought him to the alley where the gate was.

He intended to knock there until the watchman came and let him in.

When he reached the gate he was surprised to see that two boards had been removed from the fence.

He looked in at the hole and saw the boards lying on the ground, bent and broken.

Then he remembered that the truck had backed against the fence that afternoon and had no doubt damaged it.

"The night watchman is repairing the breach," he said to himself, when he spied a nail box with a hammer lying close by. "I'll just slip in here and save him the trouble of opening the gate for me."

He did so, and was soon in the shipping room.

His pay envelope was where he left it, and he put it in his pocket.

Noticing a light in the office, he glanced in and saw Craig at the safe.

He was taking out several bags of money and placing them in an oblong japanned tin box.

Bob also saw him empty the loose change into it from the cash box.

Such strange proceedings on the part of a man who had

given up his position in the house aroused the boy's suspicions.

"I believe the rascal is robbing the safe to get square on Mr. Waters. Probably he was discharged, and gave it out to the clerks that he had resigned. I must keep my eye on him and stop him if he starts to walk out the front door with that box. He acts as if he was doing something underhanded. Just as if he was afraid some one might see what he is doing. Unless the night watchman has learned that Craig has severed his connection with the house he would hardly pay much attention to his presence in the office alone, for the cashier has always had full swing around the place. Well, I'm sure he's doing something that he oughtn't to do. A man who is capable of stooping to such a mean trick as the one he engineered against me is not too good to rob his late employer when the chance is his."

Craig snapped the spring lock of the box, shut the safe to, and then, after a cautious look around, started, not for the front door, but for the entry leading into the yard.

"He's going out the back way," breathed Bob. "That isn't a good sign. Perhaps he gave up the keys to the front door and can't get out that way. In that case he must have entered either through the hole in the fence or he got the watchman to let him in. Well, I'm going to stop him, and demand an explanation. If he puts up a fight I'll call on the watchman to help me."

Bob hastened to let himself out into the yard.

In his hurry, and the gloom of the shipping room, he tripped over a small box and went sprawling on the floor.

This delayed him, and it was several minutes before he stepped outside and hastily turned the key in the lock of the door.

Then he saw the late managing clerk just vanishing through the hole in the fence.

Unfortunately for Craig, a couple of hard-looking ruffians, who had planned to scale the fence and break into the office of the establishment by the rear way, were holding a final consultation a few yards away.

Owing to the dusk of the evening they had not noticed the break in the fence as yet.

As Craig stepped out into the alley the rascals saw him at once with the tin box, which looked as if it contained something valuable, in his hand.

He, on his part, did not notice them until they pounced upon him and bore him to the ground.

The tin box fell with a clatter to the ground, and striking a big stone, the spring released the cover and the box, turning half over, dumped a portion of its contents into the dirt.

Bob, as he crept after the recreant cashier, heard the sudden disturbance outside and wondered what it meant.

Cautiously the boy thrust his head through the hole in the fence.

He was astonished to see Craig on the ground struggling with two masked men.

The cash box lay close by.

With a thrill of satisfaction Bob reached for it.

His presence was unnoticed by the rascals, who had their hands full subduing the ex-cashier.

Drawing the japanned box to him he righted it and lifted it inside the hole.

Then he felt for and recovered the coins that had escaped when the box turned over.

A final peep into the alley showed him that the ruffians had subdued Craig and were gagging him with a handkerchief.

"This is the greatest thing I ever saw," breathed Bob. "I wonder who those scoundrels are who jumped so suddenly on the cashier. They must have been lying in wait for him outside. Probably they saw him through one of the windows taking the money from the safe, and then laid their plans to rob him of the box when he came out. They'll be looking for the box in about a minute, so I'd better make myself scarce around here. They'll be mightily surprised when they find that it has disappeared. The hole in the fence, however, will suggest the way that it vanished and they'll come into the yard to hunt for the person who got away with it under their noses. I wonder where the watchman is. I must find him."

Bob couldn't understand why Brown should have left the breach in the wall so long unrepaired.

That he had started in on the job was evident from the presence of the nail box with the hammer in it.

The boy judged that the man had gone after a couple of boards, a pile of which lay near the engine room, but he had been gone long enough to Bob's knowledge to have done the work twice over.

Expecting to find the watchman about the engine house he started in that direction.

When he reached the engine house there was no sign of the watchman.

Nor was he anywhere about the yard.

"Where the dickens can he be?" Bob asked himself.

While he was looking around he heard a racket at the fence.

"Those rascals must be up against somebody else now. Can it be the watchman?"

It was so dark now that Bob could not make anything out at all.

At that moment there was a flash and a report.

"Gee whiz! Somebody is shot," palpitated the boy, keeping close in the shadow of the engine house, for he wasn't looking for trouble.

Then he recognized the watchman's voice.

That altered the situation, as he deemed it to be his duty to go to the assistance of Brown if he was in trouble.

He shoved the tin box under the pile of lumber, picked up a stick of wood to use for a weapon, and started for the break in the fence.

He found no one at the opening, but on peering out saw a form lying motionless on the ground in the alley, who looked like one of the ruffians, while a little distance away he saw a figure bending over another man on the ground.

"I guess you're all right now, Mr. Craig," said the voice of the watchman, and then Bob understood the situation.

Brown had been away somewhere, and on his return had been attacked by the masked rascals in the same way they had done up the ex-cashier.

The watchman, however, was a harder nut to crack, and in the struggle he had drawn his revolver and shot one of the scoundrels.

The other had then taken to his heels and disappeared.

As Bob stepped out into the alley another figure appeared from the direction of the street.

It was a policeman—Officer Quigley, who had just come on his beat.

Bob and the policeman reached the two men about the same time.

"What's wrong here?" asked Quigley.

"Why, hello, Barron, what are you doing here at this hour?" asked Brown, in surprise.

"I caught two rascals coming out of a hole in the fence with Mr. Waters' cash-box in the hands of one," said Craig, glibly, trying to turn the incident to his advantage, for he knew the box was lost to him. "I tried to get it away from them when they jumped on me and laid me out. Then the watchman turned up and shot one of them. You'll find the cashbox somewhere around here in the dirt."

Quigley accepted Craig's statement for fact and went over to look at the fallen crook, while Brown struck a match and started to look for the box.

"Hold on, Mr. Brown," said Bob. "I know where the box is, so you needn't hunt for it."

"Where is it?" asked the night watchman.

"It is safe for the present. I will be responsible for it," replied the boy. "You told that story pretty well, Mr. Craig," he added, turning to the ex-managing clerk. "It's a pity it isn't true."

"What do you mean, you young rascal?" exclaimed Craig, glaring venomously at Bob.

"I mean that your yarn about the cash-box is a downright lie," replied the boy, resolutely.

"Why, you little puppy——"

"Officer Quigley, will you come here?" asked Bob.

The policeman, after examining the motionless rascal, was just coming forward.

"Did you shoot that fellow?" he asked the watchman.

"I did, in self-defense," replied Brown.

"Well, the man is dead. It will be necessary for me to place you under arrest."

"I'm sorry I killed him," replied Brown, in a shaky voice. "I didn't aim at him with that intention. It was a question of saving myself, and it was all done in a twinkling."

"I recognize the fellow as a well-known crook, so you'll be able to offer a good defense," said the officer. "I have no alternative but to take you to the station house and report the facts. You'll be held for the action of the coroner, who may see fit to parole you, or let you go altogether."

"All right," replied the night watchman, "I can't help myself. I wish you'd notify Mr. Waters, Bob, and stay around the place until some arrangements are made to guard the establishment over Sunday."

"I'll attend to that, Mr. Brown. Now, officer, I request you to arrest Mr. Craig here, also."

"Arrest me!" ejaculated the ex-cashier, while the watchman looked astonished.

"What for?" asked Quigley, gruffly.

"I charge him with rifling the office safe and trying to get away with the money in the cash-box he spoke about," said Bob, resolutely.

"Why, you miserable little whelp!" roared Craig, raising his fist to strike his young accuser.

"You take him to the station house, Officer Quigley, and

I'll go along and make the charge. I'm ready to swear that he took the money, for I saw him do it."

"You little liar!" hissed Craig.

"Why, this man is Mr. Waters' cashier!" said Quigley.

"Not since five o'clock to-day, he isn't. He either resigned or was discharged."

Craig made a dart at Bob, but the boy evaded him easily.

"If you don't take him in, Mr. Quigley, you may be up against it when Mr. Waters, after he hears my story, reports the case to the captain," insisted Bob.

The officer was in a quandary.

He saw that the boy was thoroughly in earnest, but he could hardly believe that Craig, a man who, to his knowledge, had been for several years connected with the canning house, could be guilty of such a charge.

Finally he decided to take Craig with him and let the sergeant at the desk in the station house decide the matter of holding the ex-cashier.

"Well, I'll take the three of you along, and you can have it out with the officer at the station, young man."

Craig objected to accompanying the policeman.

"You've got to come, anyway," said Quigley, "for you're an important witness in this shooting scrape, according to your own words. You'll have to tell your story at the station, and appear before the coroner's jury later on."

Craig reluctantly yielded and the party set off for the station house.

CHAPTER VI.

BOB IS REWARDED AND CRAIG GETS ANOTHER JOB.

When they all lined up before the desk Officer Quigley reported the shooting and said he had arrested the night watchman on his own admission of having shot the man, who, he said, was a crook.

Brown, on being asked if he had anything to say, made a statement of the occurrence, claiming that the shooting had been done in self-defense.

He was locked up pending the coroner's investigation.

Quigley then told the sergeant that Bob Barron had demanded the arrest of Craig, who was an important factor in the incident that preceded the shooting.

Bob then told why he had returned to the canning establishment after leaving at six o'clock with his assistant, Billy Davis; how he had seen a light in the counting room, and looking in, he had seen Craig, whose connection with the house had ceased at five o'clock, taking money and bills out of the safe and putting them in the tin box.

"That looked decidedly suspicious to me," went on Bob, "and I decided to stop him from getting away, especially as he started to make his exit by the yard. He got out through a hole in the fence before I could reach him. Then I heard a noise in the alley and looking out saw that Craig had been attacked by two masked men, who I was satisfied were crooks. It would have been folly for me to have gone to his assistance, as the men were powerful enough to do me up in short order, so I did the next best thing—I recovered the cash-box and went in search of the watchman, whom I supposed to be about the yard somewhere. He was not, however, and about the time I had ascertained the fact I heard the shot in the alley and the watchman's voice. Believing that he had also been attacked by the same men I

hid the cash-box, and grabbing a piece of wood, went to his aid."

Bob then told how he and Officer Quigley arrived simultaneously on the scene, and what took place before they left the spot for the station house.

"The fact that Mr. Craig failed to get away with his plunder doesn't make him out to be less guilty, and on that ground I ask for his arrest until I can communicate with Mr. Waters," concluded Bob.

Craig was asked what he had to say to the boy's story.

He denounced it as a lie, and repeated his former statement that he had seen the crooks coming from the building with the cash-box, and that in the interest of his late employer he had tried to get it away from them with the unpleasant result that followed.

"I'll have to hold you, Mr. Craig," said the sergeant. "I'll send a detective around to the place. If the crooks entered the office and stole the cash-box, as you say they did, there will be some evidence on the premises to substantiate your story. If the money was in the safe they couldn't get it without blowing the door open."

With that the sergeant ordered an officer to lock the ex-cashier up.

He made a vigorous kick against the indignity, but it didn't go.

He also realized that his own story would hardly hold water in face of the investigations of an expert detective.

Bob hurried from the station back to the canning establishment, and after covering the hole in the fence with a couple of boards, he entered the office and got into communication with Mr. Waters, at his home, over the telephone.

He told him all that had happened.

How Brown was under arrest for killing one of the crooks who had attacked him, and that the place was without a night watchman, though he offered to fill the bill until relieved.

Also, that he had caused the arrest of Craig for looting the safe and attempting to get away with his plunder.

Mr. Waters thanked and complimented him for the part he had taken in the interest of the house, assured him that his services would not be forgotten, and said that he would be downtown right away.

While Bob was thus employed a patrol wagon came from the station and carried away the body of the dead crook.

A detective also appeared and began an investigation, though Bob told him that he would find nothing to substantiate Craig's story.

He showed the officer the tin box into which the ex-cashier had jumbled the cash he had taken from the safe.

The detective easily saw that the safe had not been tampered with, and there were no signs to indicate that the office had been broken into.

He had about closed his investigation when Mr. Waters made his appearance.

He recognized the three bags of silver coin in the tin box as part of the money left in the safe when the office was closed at five o'clock.

He opened the safe and the absence of anything in the shape of money confirmed his statement, and was pretty good proof of Bob's story.

He decided, however, not to prosecute Craig, and sent Bob to the station to withdraw his charge.

The late managing clerk was then permitted to go free, but was told that he would be required to appear as a witness before the coroner's jury on Monday morning.

A temporary night watchman was secured and Bob was enabled to go home.

It was nearly ten o'clock before he sat down to his supper, which his mother had kept warm, supposing he had been detained at his place of business.

Of course he had an interesting story to tell her about what had happened to him through going back for his pay envelope, which he had forgotten in the shipping room.

An account of the matter was printed in the papers next morning.

Billy Davis read it and was greatly astonished.

He rushed over to Bob's house to get fuller particulars.

"So the boss isn't going to push the case against Craig?" he said.

"No. It's lucky for Craig that Mr. Waters was so easy with him, for there was plenty of circumstantial evidence to back up my statement, and I think there is little doubt that had he been brought to trial a conviction could have been secured."

The coroner's jury on Monday morning found Brown had acted in self-defense in killing the crook, whose death was regarded as a benefit to the public, and the coroner discharged the watchman from custody.

On Monday afternoon Mr. Waters called Bob into his private office and presented him with the sum of \$200 as evidence of his appreciation of the boy's services on Saturday night.

Bob told the merchant that he had not expected to be rewarded for doing merely what he regarded as his plain duty, and thanked him for the present.

He opened an account in a savings bank with the money, and regarded himself as a small capitalist, for he had never owned as much as \$20 before in his life.

There were other canning establishments in Millgate besides Mr. Waters'.

The employees in all of them had been trying for some time back to get a raise in their wages.

Mr. Waters was the only employer who had taken the request into consideration, but the best he would do was to meet his men half way.

They wanted ten per cent. advance, and he offered them five.

The men accepted the compromise with some dissatisfaction, as it was better than nothing.

The other proprietors refused to make any advance whatever, and there was talk of a strike at their establishments.

There had been threats of strikes before, but they had amounted to nothing, so the owners of the canning houses were not particularly worried on the present occasion.

The increased cost of living, however, made the employees more and more dissatisfied with the state of affairs, and committees were formed in each of the establishments, Mr. Waters' excepted, to bring their grievances to a head.

The Waters people had been invited to join, but as they were now receiving a five per cent. advance they hesitated to participate in the movement.

This hesitation, however, was not a unit.

There were hot-headed kickers on the different floors who were eager to take part in anything that promised the full ten per cent. advance they were looking for.

Although in great minority, these men were dangerous, notwithstanding, and the ready arguments they put forth swayed the judgment of those who were open to persuasive reason.

If the working forces of all the factories except the Waters plant went on strike it would mean a considerable increase of business for the latter.

This fact was appreciated by the other proprietors, and they were much put out with Mr. Waters for yielding the five per cent. advance, which they feared might keep his employees in line in case of trouble.

They appointed a committee of two to call on their business rival for the purpose of persuading him to cancel the advance and stand in with them on the wage question, but he declined to accede to their wishes on the ground that he believed the demands of the workmen were in a great measure just, and that he had raised the compensation of his own force to the extent he believed he could afford.

This was the state of affairs at the time Craig severed his connection with Mr. Waters, and the ex-cashier took advantage of it to apply for a position in a rival house, and to suggest that his knowledge of Mr. Waters' methods and trade might be useful to the opposition.

The man to whom he applied thought so, too, and he had other thoughts in connection with the usefulness of Andrew Craig, and so, after consulting with the other canning men, Craig was employed to act in a special capacity by the opposition.

CHAPTER VII.

BOB ON THE SCENT OF TROUBLE.

"Say, Bob," said Billy Davis, one morning soon after the events just narrated, as he was hanging his hat and coat up preparatory to beginning work, "I hear that the men at Jenkins & Talbot are going on strike Monday for an advance in pay."

"I wouldn't be surprised if they did," replied Bob, who was aware of the rather strained relation that existed between the proprietors and the employees of the other canning houses.

"If Jenkins & Talbot's men go out it is almost certain to start a general strike in the other houses. Then we'll be the only establishment in our line doing business in Millgate."

"In which case, Billy, you and I are liable to be overworked," laughed Bob.

"You mean the boss will get a lot of trade away from the other chaps?"

"That's about the size of it."

"If we have to work overtime we'll get extra pay. So will all hands."

"Our people are not thoroughly satisfied with the five per cent. advance, but I don't think we'll have any trouble."

"I don't agree with you there, Bob," said Billy. "Reddy McCue, the foreman of the floor where I worked for the short time Shattuck had my place down here, was violently opposed to the hands accepting the compromise offered by the boss. And he isn't the only one holding the same opin-

ion. Jim Orchard, on the top floor, with several pals, and Jude Starbeam and his cronies on the second floor, are hand in glove with McCue. Those men are trouble breeders and will bear watching."

"They can't do anything, Billy, for the majority rules."

"You can't tell what they may be able to do. Reddy is a mighty smooth talker, and can argue like a sea lawyer, while Orchard and Starbeam are good seconds. I saw the three the other night standing in front of a saloon talking with a crowd of men who work for Jenkins & Talbot. I didn't hear what they said, but I can easily guess. Our people wouldn't send a committee to join the ten per cent. advance movement, so, I guess, McCue, Orchard and Starbeam have organized themselves into an independent committee to push things along."

"They'd better look out, I'm thinking, or they may all get fired from here. Mr. Waters isn't a man who will stand any nonsense," said Bob.

"They may get their work in before he can head them off."

"I doubt it. But it's time you got to work, Billy. We'll talk about this thing another time."

A few minutes before the six o'clock whistle blew that night Bob went to the shed where the cases were stored to pick out a box for an order that Billy was to fill first thing in the morning.

While he was in there the whistle blew and the men knocked off work.

He had pulled a box to one side and was measuring it with a ruler when three men entered the shed.

Bob recognized them as Reddy McCue, Jim Orchard and Jude Starbeam.

They didn't notice him as they stopped just inside the door.

After what Billy had said about these three Bob regarded their presence there as suspicious, and he listened to what they said.

"It's understood that we're to meet Andrew Craig to-night at the old house down the road," said McCue.

"At what hour?" asked Starbeam.

"Ten o'clock, sharp. He told me that there was a wad of dough in it for each of us."

"What's in the wind?" asked Orchard.

"That will all be explained to-night. He wouldn't say a word to me alone. He wants to be sure that we three will pull together."

"Oh, we'll pull together, all right, if there's money in it," said Orchard.

"That's what I told him. We'll meet at Beckley's saloon and go to the house together. Understand?"

"Yes," replied the other two with one voice.

"Get to the saloon at not later than nine, but the earlier the better. He gave me the price of a dozen rounds of drinks, which shows that he means business."

"I would like to know what Craig wants with us," said Starbeam. "He's a gent, and not one of us."

"That's right," interjected Orchard. "He's workin' for Jenkins & Talbot now. The hands of that firm are going on strike Monday, sure. He may be up to some trick."

"He'd better not try any funny business with us," said McCue; "not if he knows when he's well off."

"I should say not," nodded Orchard.

"We'll find out to-night just what his game is," continued McCue. "I think it has somethin' to do with this place, for he's sore on Waters. So are we, that's why we want to line up with him if there's anythin' in it, as he says there is. Well, let's be goin'. Don't forget. Beckley's saloon by eight, if possible, but not later than nine. The earlier you get there the more you get to drink."

With those words Reddy McCue led the way out of the shed, his cronies following at his heels.

"So those chaps are to meet Andrew Craig to-night at the old house down the road for a consultation over some project that means no good, I'll bet, for Mr. Waters," said Bob to himself, as he watched the three men walk across the yard toward the gate. "It may be a good thing that I overheard this arrangement, for I guess it is my duty to try and find out what the project is. The only way to get around that is for me to go to the old house ahead of these men and Craig, hide there and endeavor to learn all I can about the scheme in view. Yes, that's what I'll do. I know Craig has no good will toward Mr. Waters, notwithstanding that the old man refrained from prosecuting him for the safe business. Craig being now with an opposition house, will naturally work against us, and, under the circumstances, will take great pleasure in hurting us all he can. It is up to us to stand him off if we can, and I mean to do my share of the good work, for Mr. Waters has treated me first-class."

Bob, having found a case to suit him, carried it over to the shipping room, where Billy, with his hat and coat on, was waiting to go home with him.

"You were a long time getting that box," remarked Billy.

"Yes, but it happened that I had something else to attend to at the same time. Come on, if you're ready to go," said Bob.

"I've been ready since the whistle blew," replied Billy, jumping up and following Bob outside.

"Shall I see you at the gym to-night?" asked Billy, as they were about to separate at the usual corner.

"No. I've got some business to attend to that will prevent me from being there," answered Bob.

"All right. Be good to yourself till I see you in the morning," said Billy, and the boys took different routes to their homes.

"I'm going out to-night on special business connected with the house, mother," said Bob, after he had finished his supper. "I can't tell when I'll be home. It may be late. At any rate, don't worry about me."

"Very well, my son. Take care of yourself."

Bob knew that the expedition he was bound on had an element of peril attached to it, for Reddy McCue and his two cronies were tough citizens, and Andrew Craig entertained no kindly feelings toward him.

If they caught him spying on them the chances were they would handle him pretty roughly, especially if their business was of a nature that would not bear the light of public scrutiny.

In fact, there were a whole lot of things they might do to him that he wouldn't like, therefore, he figured that it would be well for him to provide himself with a weapon of some kind for self-defense.

The only thing available was a short, stout, polished locust club, like an abbreviated policeman's billy, which hung

on the wall near the head of his bed by means of a leather thong passing through a hole in the handle.

Bob took this club with him when he set out for the old house down the road.

He also carried a piece of candle and a box of matches.

The house in question stood about a mile outside of town, on a lonesome stretch of the turnpike, and well back from the road.

The nearest habitation to it was a roadhouse, half a mile away.

It had long been without a tenant, and was falling into ruin, for it was involved in a complicated lawsuit.

A narrow creek, connecting with a distant river, ran within a hundred feet of the building, crossing under the road, which was bridged at that point.

No one ever visited the house, but an occasional tramp, perhaps, therefore it was a good place in which to hold a secret meeting.

Bob proceeded toward it by a short cut across the fields, and the walk was not particularly exciting, for the night was overcast and dark, and the wind blew in chilly puffs across the open country, and the prospect generally was rather depressing than otherwise.

Anticipation about what he expected to discover prevented Bob from noticing the unfavorable conditions attending his walk.

When he reached the road opposite the house he cast a wary glance up and down the turnpike, but it was deserted as far as he could see.

Then he looked over at the grim old house, standing dark and silent in the midst of rank vegetation, which had blotted out the path to the front door and usurped the larger part of the yard.

It was surrounded by a fence that had tumbled down in a dozen places.

Thinking it the part of a wise general to make his approach from the rear, he made a detour by way of the bank of the creek, at one point of which he saw a small boat, half full of water, tied to a stake, and walked up to the kitchen annex of the building.

Trying the door, he found it locked.

He then transferred his attention to a side door, but that was locked, too.

"If the front door is also locked, as I should imagine it is, how are Craig and the others to get in unless they have a key?" Bob said to himself. "Maybe they don't intend to enter the house, but hold their consultation on the front stoop, which is well enough adapted for purposes of secrecy on such a dark night as this."

The front door was locked, and all the windows appeared to be nailed or otherwise secured.

Bob returned to the rear again and studied the house.

There was a tall water-butt at the back of the annex.

By mounting this one could reach the roof of the kitchen.

Bob proceeded to do this, as his object was to reach one of the windows of the upper floor, and see if he could enter the building that way.

On reaching the roof of the annex he tried one of two windows, now within his reach, and, much to his satisfaction, found that he could raise the sash.

He did so, and scrambled into a vacant room.

As a matter of caution, though he did not believe there

was any one in the house then, he removed his shoes and investigated the three rooms on that floor.

The rooms were alike bare, and the floors covered with a fine dust in which his stockinged feet left tracks, though he didn't notice that fact in the dark.

Having seen all he wanted to, and looked into the spacious closets, he descended the front stairs and examined each of the rooms on the ground floor, of which there were four, two on either side of the wide hall.

They were also bare and carpeted with dust.

He completed his survey with a visit to the kitchen and a glance down the dark stairs that led to the cellar.

Nothing remained for him to do but await the arrival of Craig and the men he had arranged to meet there.

An examination of the front door showed him that it was bolted, so it was quite impossible for them to enter that way, even if they had a key.

Bob decided to return to the upper floor and keep a watch from the windows that overlooked the road.

Striking a match and consulting his silver watch, he saw that it was half-past nine o'clock.

"Craig and the men ought to show up soon," he thought.

Presently he saw a horseman approaching from the direction of Millgate.

"I wouldn't be surprised if that was Craig now," muttered the young shipping clerk, keeping his eye on the horseman.

Bob was satisfied he had made no mistake in his surmise when the man drew rein in the road fronting the house, dismounted, and led his animal in through the open and broken-down gate.

As man and horse passed around the building toward the rear Bob recognized Craig without any great difficulty.

He rushed to one of the rear windows just in time to see Craig tying his animal to the fence.

The ex-cashier then returned to the front of the house and stood near the veranda, evidently on the lookout for Reddy McCue and his companions.

It wasn't long before Bob made out three indistinct figures walking along the road toward the house.

"There are the chaps, for a dollar," he said.

And he was right.

The three men turned in at the gate and joined Craig.

After a brief converse the party started for the back of the building.

Looking down from one of the rear windows, Bob saw that Craig had a key to the kitchen door.

A moment later the party entered the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

BOB DISCOVERS A PLOT TO WRECK THE CANNING ESTABLISHMENT.

Bob hurried to the head of the stairs and listened.

He heard footfalls in the back, which, however, soon died away into complete silence.

"Where the dickens are they now?" Bob asked himself, after straining his ears for some moments. "I'll bet they've gone into the cellar. They can show a light down there and no one will see it. This meeting must be mighty important. Too bad I didn't think of hiding down there on a chance of them holding their confab there, as they are going to do."

Now I'm afraid I sha'n't be able to get within earshot of them. No good of my staying up here. I must see if I can't get around the difficulty."

With his shoes in his hand, Bob slipped quietly downstairs and made his way cautiously to the back of the house.

There was no one in sight, so there was no doubt but that the men were in the cellar.

The door leading to the stairs was shut.

Bob opened it carefully and listened.

He heard voices proceeding from the fore part of the place.

From where he stood he could see no light.

He was too far away from the men to hear what they were saying.

The only way to overcome that difficulty was to get into the cellar himself.

This looked like a ticklish job for him to undertake.

Still, he might as well be a thousand miles away as where he stood, for all the good it did him.

"I've got to enter the cellar," he breathed. "That's all there is to it."

To carry his shoes in his hand would embarrass him, so he stowed them away in the corner of a closet.

Then, grasping his locust club tightly, he began the descent of the steps.

Half way down he was able to look into the cellar.

In the front part of the place, seated in a circle on boxes around a keg on which stood a candle in a bed of melted tallow, were the four men.

Craig was addressing McCue and his cronies, and they were paying close attention to him.

Slowly, step by step, Bob made his way to the bottom in the dense gloom which hid that part of the cellar.

Getting down on his hands and knees, he crawled to the nearest wall, and then advanced toward them.

He saw a pile of debris ahead, behind which he proposed to hide if he could reach it without discovery.

He had almost gained his goal when his foot hit a bottle.

"What's that?" cried McCue, who was blessed with uncommonly sharp ears.

"What's the matter?" asked Craig.

Bob stopped with his heart in his mouth and hugged the ground as close as he could.

"I heard a noise just now."

None of the others had heard it, but Orchard suggested that it might have been a rat.

"I guess that's what it was," said McCue, much to Bob's relief.

Craig continued his line of argument, and Bob pushed forward till he put the pile of dirt and odds and ends between him and the men.

"Now you see," Craig was saying, "a general strike among all the canning houses is counted on, for the proprietors simply do not intend to yield to the men's demands."

"They'll wish they did before the strike is over," said McCue, darkly.

"That has nothing to do with me," replied Craig. "The moment the strike goes into effect Waters is going to hook in on the trade of the other fellows, for there doesn't seem to be any immediate prospect of a strike in his establish-

ment, owing to the fact that he has given his hands a five per cent. raise."

"Don't you be too sure there won't be a strike there," said McCue, significantly.

"I have canvassed the situation and I don't see any indication of it."

"You don't know what's goin' on under the surface. There's plenty of kickin' bein' done."

"Not by the reliable hands, McCue. Most of the dissatisfaction is shown by yourself, Orchard, Starbeam and a few others; but there isn't enough to count."

"How do you know?" snarled McCue. "You ain't workin' at our place any more."

"No matter how I know. That's my business. I know a great deal more about the inside workings of Waters' place than you think I do. I know, for instance, that you three chaps are not over-loyal to your associates. That you are trying to engineer a walk-out in your factory, not simply to win the additional five per cent. advance, but because you hope to make a deal with Waters and then kill the project."

McCue sprang to his feet with an imprecation and thrust his hand toward his hip pocket, while Orchard and Starbeam looked as black as the ten of clubs.

We will not attempt to repeat what he said, but it was more forcible than polite.

His manner was extremely menacing, and Bob thought there was going to be serious trouble, but Craig never turned a hair.

He coolly smoked a Turkish cigarette, and eyed McCue with the utmost indifference, not to say disdain.

Much as Bob despised Craig, he could not help admiring his nerve.

Although McCue was a ruffian at heart, and was strong enough to have crushed the ex-cashier with one hand, he was, nevertheless, intimidated by the man's attitude.

Craig was one of those men who, under given circumstances, could overawe a mob of desperate and armed men by his eyes and the mere power of his will.

In this case he did not open his mouth again until after McCue, with many unpleasant expressions, resumed his seat.

Then he tossed the butt of his cigarette away and calmly lit another.

After all, there was nothing to commend in Craig's courage.

He was simply a cold-blooded rascal, whose education and associations gave him a power over ordinary scamps, and who, if put to the test, could give even such scoundrels as McCue cards and spades in pure villainy.

"Well," said Craig, coolly, "ain't I right?"

"No, you ain't right," snarled McCue, in an ugly tone.

"All right. We won't argue the matter. You know my opinion."

"Hang your opinion. What me and my friends want to know is what do you want with us? What's your game, anyway?"

"My game, as you call it, is this: I don't believe that you and your crowd can bring about a strike in Waters'."

"I say we can!" roared McCue.

"Nonsense! You only think you can. Even if you succeeded it wouldn't do you any good, for I know Waters

better than you do. Now, as the case stands, next week every canning house in Millgate will have to shut down but Waters'. His place will continue to do business—more business than ever—unless——”

“Unless what?” growled McCue.

“Something happens to prevent him.”

“A strike will happen.”

“I can't take the chances on that. Something else must happen. Do you understand?”

“What else must happen?” asked McCue, curiously.

“That's what I invited you here to consider.”

“What do you mean?” asked McCue, while his cronies looked surprised and interested. “What have we got to do with somethin' happenin' to Mr. Waters?”

“That's for you to say,” replied Craig, with a shrug of the shoulders as he lit another cigarette. “You have your price, haven't you?”

“My price?”

“Yes, your price. You three are willing to take some chances if you're paid well enough, aren't you?”

“What chances have we got to take?”

“The chances of detection, and detection means the State prison.”

The men looked at one another, and McCue drew a long breath.

“What do you want us to do, and what are we to be paid for doin' it?” he said.

Craig studied their faces a moment before he spoke.

He was about to throw the dice, and he was calculating the chances.

“Look here, McCue, I've got to have some guarantee that, if you fellows don't want to go into the job, you won't squeal on me. There are three of you and I am only one.”

“What guarantee do you want?”

“This,” said Craig, taking a paper from his pocket. “I want each to sign it with me. That will put us all in the same boat. Then it wouldn't be safe for you to open your mouths.”

“Supposin' we won't sign that paper?” replied McCue.

“Then we quit right here, and you'll each lose the chance to make \$1,000.”

“One thousand dollars! Do we get one thousand apiece if—if we jine in with you?”

“That's the figure, but you've got to sign the paper before this thing goes any further.”

“But if we do sign it, and then don't want to go into the game, maybe you kin put us in a hole with that paper,” said McCue, suspiciously.

“No. The object of the paper is merely to protect me against you chaps blowing the gaff, as the saying is.”

“Read it to us.”

Craig did so.

The paper implicated the undersigned in a certain unnamed conspiracy, a space being left blank for the scheme which Craig intended to fill in as soon as he had secured the signatures to it.

“Well,” said McCue, turning to Orchard and Starbeam, “do we sign or don't we? If we do we'll get in line to pocket a thousand, if we don't, we kin go home, I s'pose.”

Neither Orchard nor Starbeam relished the idea of signing the paper.

It looked dangerous to them.

Still, \$1,000 was a great temptation to them.

They talked the matter over between themselves and finally decided to sign the paper.

Craig produced a stylographic pen, spread the paper out on top of the box he had been sitting on, and handed the pen to McCue.

Reddy signed his name where the ex-cashier pointed.

The others followed suit.

Lastly Craig signed the document himself.

“There, now, I've put my name to it. That puts us all in the same boat.”

McCue and his comrades were satisfied.

“Now,” said McCue, “what's your scheme?”

“The scheme is this: The moment the strike is on in the canning trade, Waters' establishment must be put out of business.”

“How?”

“By you three men.”

“What are we to do?”

“When the time comes I will provide each of you with a powerful dynamite cartridge. After the whistle blows to shut down for the day you will each lag behind on his floor—you, Orchard, on the top; you, McCue, on the third, and you, Starbeam, on the second. As soon as all hands are gone you will start the clock attachment connected with the bomb and place it in a spot where it will do the most damage when it explodes. They will be timed for thirty minutes. Then you will leave for home as usual. That's all.”

“Do we get a thousand apiece for doin' that?”

“You do.”

“When do we get it?”

“Five hundred down when I hand you the cartridge, and five hundred next morning after the job is done.”

“It's a bargain as far as I'm concerned. What do you say, pards?”

“We're in on it,” they answered.

“I thought I could depend on you,” said Craig, in a tone of satisfaction.

Bob was so excited by what he had heard that he made an involuntary movement with one of his arms.

His hand struck a small, empty box on top of the pile of refuse.

Dislodged from its position, it rolled down and landed with a light crash on the floor.

No rat could make that noise, and the four rascals sprang to their feet in consternation, while poor Bob thought he saw his finish.

CHAPTER IX.

BOB EXPOSES THE PLOT AND IS REWARDED.

For a moment there was a death-like silence in the cellar.

Then Craig said, in a low, repressed voice: “It looks as if we had a listener; that some one besides ourselves is down here.”

“Then he'd better say his prayers,” said McCue, drawing his revolver, “for he's not likely to leave the place alive.”

“If there's any one here he's hidin' behind that pile of dirt,” said Orchard.

"That's my opinion," replied Craig. "We must rout him out."

Bob, conscious that he was in a desperate fix, took a sudden and desperate means to try and save himself.

One of his hands rested on the larger half of a brick.

As the men started to close in on his hiding place he grabbed the brick and threw it at Craig.

The ex-cashier saw it hurtling toward him and dodged, but not soon enough to wholly escape.

The missile struck him on the side of the head, stunning him partly, and then, glancing off, flew straight at the candle.

In a moment the cellar was in complete darkness and the rascals were placed at an unexpected disadvantage.

Bob, quick to perceive his opportunity, sprang to his feet and dashed lightly for the stairs.

He reached them and flew up into the entry before the candle was relighted and the rascals were ready to proceed to business once more.

When they looked behind the dirt there was no one there.

"He's gone, whoever he was," cried McCue, with an imprecation. "We must follow him at once."

"You and Orchard start at once, while Starbeam and myself make a thorough search of the cellar," said Craig, wiping the blood from his face with his handkerchief.

By that time Bob, shoes in hand, was darting into the kitchen.

The outside door was locked, but the key was in the lock.

The boy let himself out in a twinkling, then he took the key out and locked the door from the outside.

"I've got them caged for awhile," he said, gleefully, as he pulled on his shoes. "Now for Millgate and Mr. Waters. I'll take Craig's horse and make an easier and quicker job of it."

Untying the animal, he jumped on his back and started for the gate.

He heard a crash of glass behind.

"They've discovered they are locked in and are making a break for liberty," chuckled Bob. "They'll have a pretty job trying to catch me."

Pushing through the gate, he put spurs to his horse and galloped off down the road toward Millgate.

Three-quarters of an hour later he was ringing the bell at Mr. Waters' home.

It was close on to midnight, and the family had retired.

Bob's summons, however, awakened the merchant, who opened his window and asked what was wanted.

"I'm Bob Barron, Mr. Waters. I want to see you right away on a matter of the greatest importance."

The ring of the boy's voice, not to mention his visit at that unseemly hour, told Mr. Waters that something decidedly unusual was in the wind.

"I'll be down in a few minutes, Bob," he said.

Then he shut the window, and partially dressing himself, hurried downstairs and admitted the boy.

"Come into my library," he said, leading the way.

Turning up the gas, and pointing to a chair, he said:

"I am ready to hear what you have to say."

Then Bob told his story, beginning with the brief meeting of the three men—McCue, Orchard and Starbeam—in the box shed, and then explaining how he had visited the old house down the road in advance of the hour arranged

for the meeting; how he had entered the cellar after the arrival of Craig and the McCue crowd; what he had overheard while down there, and the sensational finish that he had inadvertently brought about.

"I made my escape on Craig's horse, and came direct here to tell you the particulars," concluded Bob.

"You're an uncommon boy, Bob," said the merchant, in a hearty tone that showed he meant it. "You have nipped a dangerous conspiracy in the bud, and no doubt saved my factory. Such zeal as you have voluntarily shown in my interest shall not pass unrecognized, I can promise you. I shall send for a detective at once and see what can be done about punishing these four rascals. The trouble will be that their absolute denial will offset your unsupported testimony. I judge that it will do no good to cause their arrest unless the detective I will put on the case finds enough circumstantial evidence to in a measure corroborate your statement."

Mr. Waters went to his telephone and called up the station house.

He asked that a sharp sleuth be sent to his house at once to attend to a difficult case.

In half an hour one of the best detectives in Millgate responded.

Bob told his story all over again, the officer asked him many pertinent questions, and then he was allowed to go home, the detective taking possession of the saddle horse.

It was after two when the young shipping clerk turned in, and three o'clock struck before he got to sleep.

When he reached the factory next morning he went to work just as if nothing had happened.

Reddy McCue, Orchard and Starbeam also appeared and went to work as usual, Craig having convinced them that such would be the wisest course.

The four conspirators were at first unaware of the identity of the person who had overheard their conversation in the cellar of the old house and, in making his escape, had locked them in the building, but on the following evening McCue learned from a friend that he had seen Bob Barron at about half-past eleven o'clock the night before riding at breakneck speed out of the road into the town.

That fact convinced McCue that Bob was the spy, and he hastened to tell his companions, as well as Craig.

The four held a consultation, and it was decided to get square with the young shipping clerk at the first chance.

Had McCue and his companions been left to their own devices it is probable that they would have skipped the town to avoid anticipated arrest.

Craig, however, calmed their fears by assuring them that Bob's unsupported testimony amounted to nothing.

That if they were arrested they could put up an indignant and absolute denial, which, in the absence of any proof against them, was bound to see them through.

"As far as I'm concerned," he said, "I can prove an alibi, and as an additional measure of protection I advise you to arrange with some of your friends to swear that you were in town all last evening."

"We will," replied McCue, taking the hint. "But I'd give somethin' to know how that boy discovered that we were goin' to meet at the old house. I can't understand it."

"Neither can I," answered Craig. "However, we'll settle his hash before long. He's altogether too smart to be al-

lowed to run at large. It was through him I had to leave Waters', and he nearly got me into a bad scrape last Saturday afternoon. Now he's spoiled this scheme I had engineered to put the Waters factory out of business. Altogether I've got quite an account to settle with him."

"And we'll help you settle it," said McCue, in a tone that meant no good to Bob Barron.

During the rest of the week the detective held several conferences with Mr. Waters, but sufficient corroborative evidence was not forthcoming to warrant the arrest of the conspirators, and so nothing was done.

The canned goods manufacturer, however, decided to discharge McCue, Orchard and Starbeam from his employ, on the general ground that they were trying to incite a feeling of discontent on the wage question among the other employees.

So on Saturday afternoon when they received their pay envelopes they also received a pink slip notifying them that their services were no longer required at the factory.

Under ordinary circumstances they would have put up a big howl at their summary discharge, but on this occasion they did not consider it prudent to do so.

Just before the hands were paid off that day Mr. Waters called Bob into his office and presented him with his check for \$500, in consideration of the special service he had rendered in detecting and exposing the scheme to destroy the factory.

Bob was delighted at this evidence of his employer's appreciation, and he was still more pleased when Mr. Waters told him that his wages would be raised from the \$12 he was receiving to \$15.

He was now worth \$700 in his own right, and felt more of a small capitalist than ever.

On Sunday afternoon the people connected with the other canning houses in Millgate met at a small hall and decided to vote to send their employers an ultimatum on the wage question—the ten per cent. advance must be granted or they would quit work in a body.

Next morning a committee waited on the head of each establishment and notified him of the resolution adopted by the men.

In every instance they were turned down.

The result was that on Tuesday morning the Waters canning house was the only factory of the six in town that was in operation.

CHAPTER X.

BOB AND BILLY AID BEAUTY IN DISTRESS.

Bob and Billy heard on their way to work that the anticipated strike had just gone into effect.

The majority of the other employees also knew about the matter when they reached the factory that morning, and little else was talked about on the three upper floors for the whole day.

There was much speculation indulged in as to the outcome of the strike, but the general impression prevailed that the men would lose.

At noon Billy went to the corner to get his lunch.

He did this because he wanted to find out how things were going on at the rival canning houses—the whole group being within a radius of three blocks.

When he returned he brought Bob a budget of news.

"There's almost a riot over at Jenkins & Talbot," he said, in some excitement.

"Is that so?" replied Bob, with an interested look.

"Yes. About twenty new hands arrived from Cleveland by the ten o'clock train. They were escorted to J. & T.'s factory by several police. When they reached the picket line they were greeted with hoots and jeers, and before they got to the gate the strikers attacked them with stones and their fists. The police reserves were hurried to the spot and I hear several arrests were made—among others Reddy McCue, who, with Orchard and Starbeam, is taking an active interest in the strike."

"The whole three ought to be yanked in and sent up," replied Bob. "They're a pretty hard lot."

"You bet they are," agreed Billy.

He would have thought them twice as hard if he had known what Bob discovered that night in the cellar of the old house down the road.

Bob had been cautioned by both Mr. Waters and the detective to say nothing about his adventure, and so he didn't even tell his mother or sister.

"The proprietors of all the factories are working together as a unit, and are filling the strikers' places with new help as fast as they can get the hands. It is my opinion that all who quit work will find themselves in the soup by the end of the week," went on Billy.

"Well, I sympathize with the men, in a general way," said Bob. "Our people have been given a five per cent. raise. The other bosses ought to have done as well by their employees. They can afford it if Mr. Waters can. The cost of living is going up all the time, little by little, and wages ought to keep pace with it, otherwise the working-man is bound to suffer."

"A fellow can't afford to get married these days, can he?" grinned Billy.

"Were you thinking about making some poor girl miserable?" laughed Bob.

"Me! Why, I'm only sixteen. What would I do with a wife? My folks need all my wages to help keep the pot boiling. I guess you're in the same boat, aren't you?"

"I haven't any ground for kicking," responded Bob, thinking of his \$700.

"Your sister has a growing business that is bound to make her independent, so I guess you're much better off than most young fellows in your position."

"Yes, my sister has accumulated quite a trade already. Her prices are reasonable, she turns out fine hats for the money, and she is well liked by her customers. She's doing fine now, and is bound to do twice as well in the future, if nothing unforeseen turns up to give her a set-back."

At that moment a crowd of the strikers appeared suddenly in front of the Waters factory, and began to hoot and howl at the workers on the upper floors, many of whom were looking out of the windows, for the one o'clock whistle hadn't sounded yet.

Mud and small stones were thrown up at the unpopular people who had refused to join in the strike, and one or two panes of glass were broken.

Fearing trouble, Mr. Morton, the new managing clerk, telephoned the facts to the police station.

Bob and Billy heard the uproar in front, but they

couldn't see anything from their windows, which opened on the alley.

"Gee!" ejaculated Billy. "Some of the strikers are paying us a visit. They're dead sore on our people for refusing to join them—just as if the men and girls would be such chumps. I hope there won't be a riot down here."

"The police will be around pretty soon and will chase them away," replied Bob.

At that moment there was a rattle of gravel against one of the shipping room windows.

"Hello!" cried Billy. "Some of those chaps have come into the alley."

They both went to the window and looked out.

In the alley was a small crowd of tough boys headed by Noel Shattuck.

As soon as Bob and Billy appeared at the window the young rascals set up a yell of derision and began a fusillade of pebbles and dirt.

"Blessed if Shattuck isn't at the head of that gang," said Billy. "I'd like to go out and punch his head."

"You know better, Billy. The whole crowd would jump you, and you'd be roughly handled."

"I guess they would," coincided his companion. "They're too cowardly to face a fellow singly. Shattuck seems to think he's some pumpkins now."

At this point the whistle blew, and all hands returned to work.

The boys in the alley continued to pelt the windows of the shipping room, and to yell like a pack of wild Indians.

Presently the man who did Mr. Waters' trucking drove into the lane and scattered them.

But they all came back and roosted themselves on the top timbers of the fence which separated the lane from a large vacant lot.

First they amused themselves by pelting the truck driver, but stopped when he took his whip to them.

They took refuge on the other side of the fence in the lot and contented themselves with taunting him as a scab.

The strikers in front, after satisfying their resentment, retired before the police turned up, and there was no further disturbance that afternoon.

When the whistle blew to shut down for the day, scattered groups of strikers had gathered all along the block.

They were there to intercept Mr. Waters' workers and try to persuade them to join the general movement.

They were also posted at either end of the lane.

Mr. Waters had foreseen such a probability, and had requested the services of several policemen to prevent his hands from being interfered with.

Half a dozen officers kept the strikers on the move in front, while others patrolled the rear street.

This did not prevent the strikers from approaching many of the workers, but they gained nothing by it, for the Waters people were not taking any chances.

Bob and Billy were, as usual, among the last to leave.

They always walked up the alley to the rear street.

A bunch of girls employed in the labeling department preceded them.

One of these was a pretty, dark-eyed girl named Jessie Wiseman.

She was the daughter of the engineer, and was very popular among her companions.

She was about the only girl employed in the factory that Bob paid any attention to, and he appeared not a little interested in her.

On her part, she seemed to be equally interested in the stalwart, good-looking young shipping clerk.

Sometimes Bob was able to see her part of the way home, but he seldom got away when she did, as there was nearly always something for him to do after the whistle blew.

On this occasion Bob and Billy left soon after Jennie and several of her intimates passed out at the gate, and the shipping clerk spied her in the midst of the bunch half way up the alley.

"Let's hurry after the girls, Billy," he said.

Billy grinned, for he knew that Bob was sweet on Jessie Wiseman.

The girls, however, gained the street ahead of them, and the bunch broke up, Jessie and a single companion turning to the left, the others to the right.

Bob and Billy reached the street just in time to see the two girls held up by Noel Shattuck and several of his crowd.

Their object was to tease and frighten Jessie and her friend, for the street was almost deserted by this time.

Jessie's companion was a timid girl, and her evident trepidation encouraged their persecutors to take greater liberties with them.

At this stage of the game Shattuck grabbed Jessie by the arms and insisted on stealing a kiss.

"How dare you!" she cried, indignantly, trying to release herself.

"Ho!" ejaculated Noel. "That's all put on. You're just aching to be kissed."

His companions stopped to see the fun, while Jessie, with flushed countenance, succeeded in snatching away one of her arms and striking Shattuck a smart blow in the face.

"You little wildcat," cried Noel, angrily. "I'll kiss you a dozen times for that!"

He grabbed her around the waist and attempted to put his threat into execution.

No doubt he would have succeeded in spite of the girl's struggles, but for the opportune arrival of Bob and Billy on the scene.

Bob was hot under the collar when he saw how roughly Shattuck was handling the girl of his heart, and he sprang at him in a way that showed he meant business.

He fairly tore Noel away from the girl, and then jabbed him a sockdolager under the jaw which sent Shattuck reeling back against his friends.

He followed Noel up and gave him another thump that landed him on the sidewalk.

Then he stood over him with flashing eyes.

"You little beast!" he cried. "How dare you attack Miss Wiseman!"

Shattuck picked himself up and glowered at Bob.

"Help me, fellers, and we'll knock the stuffing out of him," he said to his companions.

The young toughs began to line up for business.

Bob saw there was trouble ahead, and he determined to force the fighting.

"Come on, Billy," he said, and he sailed right in at Noel and his crowd.

Billy followed at his heels, and he was as tough as any in the crowd himself.

Both he and Bob had taken a course of sparring lessons of the professor at the public gymnasium, and they knew how to use their fists with good effect.

The boys had practiced at a punching-bag till they had developed hard hitting qualities that now stood them in good stead against the half-dozen young ruffians opposed to them.

The two girls watched the scrap that ensued with fear and not a little anxiety for the safety of their gallant defenders.

Their trepidation soon turned into hope and admiration for the prowess of the two boys, Bob especially.

For a moment or two Bob and Billy seemed to be lost in the midst of a small forest of swinging arms, that landed blows all over them, and then the tide of battle changed in their favor.

Whack!

Bob slugged Shattuck in the eye, tumbling him into the street.

Biff! Biff! Biff!

Two others went down under rapid cuts from his and Billy's fists.

Smash! Biff! Thud!

Straight on the point of another chap's jaw landed Bob's mauler, and he fell back like an overturned ninepin.

That settled the battle.

All that could get away took to their heels, leaving Shattuck and two of the crowd hors du combat.

Those three had all they wanted, and made no attempt to continue the scrap.

One held his jaw in his hand, another was caressing his eye, that would be black in an hour or so, while Noel, with a damaged eye and a puffed upper lip, glared at Bob in an impotent, vindictive way.

"Aren't you brave!" cried Jessie, regarding the ruffled Bob with intense admiration and respect. "It was awfully good of you and Billy Davis to help us. I am sure we can't thank either of you enough."

"Then don't try, Jessie," responded Bob, wiping a little blood from his cut lip. "You don't suppose we were going to let those young ruffians impose on you, do you?"

"I should say not!" chipped in Billy.

"Well, you were very kind to get into trouble on our account," said the girl.

"We only did our duty. I wouldn't let any one hurt you, Jessie, if he was as big as a mountain. You ought to know that," said Bob, resolutely.

The girl blushed and smiled.

"I think a whole lot of you, Jessie, and I won't stand to have you annoyed."

"Thank you, Bob," she replied, blushing more vividly than before, and flashing a grateful look in his face.

"Well, come along. Billy and I will see you girls all the way home, if you will permit us to," said Bob, taking Jessie by the arm and starting off, followed by the valiant Billy and the timid Miss Carter.

CHAPTER XI.

BOB IN A TIGHT BOX.

The boys took the girls to their homes, and next morning when they met in the shipping room Billy referred to the scrap in high glee.

"Gee! But we did put it all over that crowd to beat the band! I'll bet they'll steer clear of us in the future. If they don't, well, say! We won't do a thing to them, bet your life!"

"I didn't care so much about what I did to the others, but it did me a whole lot of good to punch Noel Shattuck," said Bob. "He deserved all he got, and more on top of it. The idea of him trying to kiss Jessie Wiseman! It makes me hot to think about it."

"You'd rather kiss her yourself," chuckled Billy.

"Don't get gay, Billy," flushed Bob.

"Get gay! Why, isn't it a fact? I'll bet you're just dying to put your arms around her and steal the sweetness from her lips. Yum, yum, yum!" grinned the little tormentor.

"If you don't shut up I'll use you for a punching-bag," said Bob, somewhat annoyed.

"You will—I don't think," laughed Billy. "What'll I be doing?"

"You'll be fondling a sore jaw in about two shakes of a lamb's tail."

"Pooh! Forget it! Wait till we get to the gym and get the gloves on. I'll make you look six ways for Sunday," and Billy danced about the room, making passes at an imaginary opponent.

Billy, however, was only bluffing, for he had a whole lot of respect for Bob with the gloves on.

The whistle blew and they went to work.

The strikers paid another visit to the factory during the noon hour, but confined themselves to invitations to the factory workers to come out and join them.

Probably this was because there were several policemen on hand to keep order.

They turned up again at six o'clock to persuade or intimidate Waters' people to desert the factory.

Their own cause was not getting on very well.

All the other factories had started up again in part and the outlook was not to their liking.

Many of the girls had gone back to their jobs, too, while a few of the men had applied for their old jobs and had been taken on.

The better element of the strikers that took no part in the disturbances were already discouraged at the determined front presented by the proprietors.

The rougher chaps, however, tried to make them believe that in the end they would win.

Reddy McCue was discharged after Craig had paid his fine, and now he, Orchard and Starbeam were concerting measures to make Rome howl.

Their attention, however, was not directed against the five establishments that were in trouble, but, egged on by Craig, they were figuring on doing up the Waters establishment.

Several days passed and then, as every one had foreseen, orders began to increase at the Waters canning house.

Customers of the rival houses, not being able to get the goods they wanted when they needed them, rushed to the only factory in Millgate that seemed able to supply them.

The available quantity of corn, especially, that was in stock, soon melted away before the increased demand, and orders were issued for night work to keep pace with the present emergency.

Bob and Billy were included in this, because they couldn't do the packing and shipping of the extra stuff in the regular hours.

Now every night the factory was ablaze with gas jets from ground floor to roof, and the sight was not a pleasing one for the proprietors of the rival establishments to look at, for it meant that Mr. Waters was coining money at their expense.

They had only been able to half fill the vacancies left by the strikers so far, and consequently their output was scarcely half as much as in normal times.

Still they preferred to face this condition, and lose money, rather than knuckle down to their employees.

They held a meeting, at which Andrew Craig was present, and he was offered a handsome sum if he could put a spoke in the Waters wheel.

After the meeting Craig hunted up McCue, Orchard and Starbeam, and arranged for a meeting between the four that night in a rear room of the Beckley saloon.

It happened that a newsboy overheard the arrangement, and also learned enough to give him an idea that there was trouble in store for the Waters factory.

He was a particular friend of Billy Davis, so he thought Billy ought to know that there was trouble ahead.

When Billy and Bob went to the corner restaurant for supper that night between six and seven, the newsboy was waiting at the gate to see Billy.

"Hello, Mickey," said Billy when he spied him, "what are you hanging around the alley for?"

"I wanted to see you about somethin' important."

"All right. You're looking at me. What is it? By the way, this is my friend, Bob Barron. Bob, this is Mickey Feeney. Go on, Mickey."

"I came 'round to tell you dat you want to look out for trouble."

"Trouble! What kind of trouble?"

Mickey then told how he had overheard arrangements made between four men, one of whom, he said, was a well-dressed gent, for a meeting in a back room at Beckley's saloon that night at eleven o'clock, to consider some way of putting the Waters canning house out of business.

"I thought you ought to know what was in the wind," said Mickey, "so I come 'round to post you."

"Four men, and one of them a well-dressed man," said Bob. "I'll bet they were Craig, McCue, Orchard and Starbeam. They're going to hatch up a new plot, or I'm a poor guesser. Billy, we've got to take a hand in this thing, and try and find out what kind of a game they decide to work," said Bob, as he and Billy took seats in the restaurant.

"How can we find out?"

"By going to Beckley's saloon, spotting the room they're in, and trying to hear what they say."

"That's a rather tough proposition, Bob."

"You're not obliged to tackle it, Billy. I can go alone, only I thought that if two of us were on hand there'd be double the chance of catching on. These fellows are liable to do any desperate thing to stop our factory. It is only a week ago that they conspired to place a dynamite cartridge on each floor for the purpose of blowing up the building. But you mustn't mention it to any one."

"Is that a fact?" asked Billy, in surprise. "I didn't hear

anything about that before. There was nothing in the papers about such an attempt."

"It isn't known to anybody outside the rascals themselves but me, Mr. Waters and a detective."

"How did you come to hear about it?"

"Never mind how I learned about it, Billy, but I did, all right. That is the real reason why McCue and the other two were discharged. They were considered too dangerous to have around the factory. But, remember, you must keep that to yourself."

"Sure. I won't say anything about it."

"Well, Billy, chaps who won't stop at using dynamite to carry out a scheme will bear a whole lot of watching."

"I should say so."

"After we get through eating you can go back to work. I'm going to the station house to see if I can find the detective who has been watching these men. I want him to know what's on tap to-night, and the three of us will try and catch them."

"All right," said Billy.

The waiter now brought their order and they fell to with their knives and forks.

After they had finished their meal Billy returned to the factory, while Bob went to the station house.

He inquired for Detective Watson, but was told he was out.

"Too bad," said Bob, "I wanted to see him about an important matter."

"He'll be back here between this and midnight," said the man at the desk.

"I might write a note and you can give it to him when he comes in," said Bob.

The officer handed the boy a sheet of note-paper and an envelope, and told him he could write his note on the end of the desk.

Bob did so, and handed the sealed and addressed envelope to the man when he had finished.

Then he went back to the factory.

The whistle blew at ten o'clock to shut down.

"Billy," said Bob, "there's some old clothes in the closet. We'll put them on, tear a few more holes in them, and plaster our faces and hands with dirt. That will answer for a kind of disguise. As those chaps know me well I'll bandage my face up as though I'd just come out of a hospital, and then I guess they won't recognize me very easily."

Billy agreed to his companion's suggestion, and when they left the shipping room together they were both pretty hard looking objects.

"You're a picture of hard luck, Bob," grinned Billy. "You ought to have your photo taken in that get-up. You'd take the leather medal at a beauty show."

The two boys took their way to Beckley's saloon, which was not a great way off.

When they reached it Billy remained outside, while Bob entered and looked around the barroom.

There was a crowd of men drinking at the bar, and at the tables.

Many of them were strikers, and among them Bob noted Reddy McCue, Orchard and Starbeam.

They were waiting for Craig to show up.

Bob saw a vacant table in a corner, and he took possession

of it, dropping his head on his arms and pretending to fall asleep.

In about fifteen minutes Craig entered the saloon.

McCue and his cronies separated themselves from the crowd and joined him.

The four then retired to a back room, which they reached through a passage.

Bob got up, and watching his chance, followed them.

He found himself in a narrow passage with a door that communicated with the back yard.

A light shone through some cracks, and in a moment he had his eye applied to one of them.

He found himself looking into a small room furnished with a plain, round table and four chairs.

The chairs were occupied by Craig and his fellow conspirators.

By placing his ear to the crack Bob could hear quite distinctly what was spoken in the room.

He listened intently to the details of a plot that Craig unfolded to the three rascals, and which they agreed to take a hand in.

The plan was to climb the fence in the rear of the canning house, lay for the watchman, overcome and secure him, and then fire the building from the cellar.

The scheme was to be put into effect some time during the early hours of morning by McCue and his pals, and they were to receive \$1,000 apiece if the scheme succeeded.

Bob was so deeply interested in the piece of rascality that was being hatched in the room that he didn't notice the opening of the passage door leading into the barroom.

Craig had pushed an electric bell for the barkeeper to send his assistant to the room to take their orders for drinks.

It was this man who entered the passage in his shirt sleeves.

Of course he saw Bob and what he was doing.

He grabbed the boy at once, exclaiming:

"What in thunder are you doin' here? Spyin' on the guests in the room?"

Bob looked up in a startled way.

The man knocked at the door.

McCue opened it after drawing a bolt.

Then the barkeeper's assistant pushed Bob into the room.

"I found this chap looking through a crack into this room. He must have been listening to what you were saying."

McCue, with an imprecation, seized Bob roughly by the arm.

"Who are you and what are you spyin' 'round here for? Answer me, or I'll make a worse lookin' object of you than you are."

Craig and McCue's friends looked at the apparently wretched-looking boy in surprise and ill-concealed anger.

"I wasn't doin' nuffin'," mumbled Bob, huskily, holding down his head.

"What did you hear, you young villain?" roared McCue, shaking him violently.

Bob's hat fell off, his bandage became loosened, and dropped away from his face, and then Craig recognized him at once.

With a howl of rage he sprang to his feet.

"It's Bob Barron, spying on us again," he cried, furiously.

"By the Lord Harry, it is!" snarled McCue, pushing the lad into a corner and glaring at him with a murderous look.

Jim Orchard and Jude Starbeam now identified Bob, and also jumped up with cries of anger.

Bob was clearly in a tight fix.

CHAPTER XII.

AN EXCITING TIME AT BECKLEY'S SALOON.

"So, we've caught you this time, Bob Barron, eh?" said Craig, deliberately. "Well, I reckon we'll fix you for keeps. You've heard too much for our good, I've no doubt, and in self-defense we've got to silence you. Get something to tie him with, Starbeam."

Craig was showing the cool, heartless side of his nature—showing the kind of man he was, and Bob realized that he was up against a hard proposition when he was up against the ex-cashier.

The boy, however, was plucky to a degree.

He didn't intend to yield without a desperate struggle.

Like a flash he sprang at McCue, before that powerful rascal even suspected what was coming, and dealt him a staggering blow in the face.

It landed straight from the shoulder, and McCue went spinning back against the table, which went over and carried the rascal with it to the floor.

In a moment the little room was a scene of intense confusion.

"Don't let him escape!" roared Craig, as Bob sprang for the door.

The barkeeper's assistant, who was a burly fellow, opened his arms to catch and detain Bob.

Biff! The boy fetched him an uppercut under the jaw that made his teeth rattle like a pair of castanets.

He staggered back against Orchard, who was also trying to get at Bob.

Craig, seeing that Bob had a chance to get away, made a rush at him, but Bob, who was thoroughly aroused, met him with a jab in the chest, such as he was accustomed to deal out to the punching-bag at the gymnasium, and Craig was stopped with a grunt.

Bob took advantage of his temporary victory to reach the door and swing it open.

He got no further, for Starbeam's hand gripped his shoulder like a vise, and Orchard reached out and grabbed him, too.

This gave the others time to recover themselves.

The scrimmage, however, had attracted notice in the barroom, and one of the persons who was in there made a dash for the passage.

This was Billy, who, according to instructions, had followed Craig inside and then, seeing his side partner enter the passage after the four men, had waited for developments.

Billy knew that Bob was in trouble, and he meant to help him out at any cost.

He was right in his element when there was excitement in the air, and he dearly loved to take a hand in a scrap when the cause was a good one.

Billy reached the door just as the men in the room were piling on Bob and bearing him to the floor.

One glance was enough for the young packer, and then he plunged into the melee.

He swung his tough fists right and left into the faces of the ruffians that had hold of Bob.

Swat! Biff! Whack!

First Starbeam caught it, then Orchard, and then the barkeeper.

And each thought a pile-driver had landed on their countenances.

In the confusion that ensued Bob managed to release himself and staggered to his feet.

Then, shoulder to shoulder, he and Billy stood the men off long enough to back away through the doorway.

The passage was now filling with excited customers of the saloon, who couldn't tell what was on the cards, other than a free fight.

Craig was furious at the success of Bob in eluding them thus far, and when he recognized Billy Davis he felt the ground giving away under himself and his associates in guilt.

McCue now had his revolver out, but a small spark of prudence prevented him from using it.

To kill Bob before so many witnesses, even if he could, was taking more chances than even that ruffian cared to do.

"Make for the back door," breathed Bob in Billy's ear, as he smashed Starbeam a stunning jab in the nose.

Billy did so.

The door was not locked, and the boy flung it open.

"Come, Bob," he shouted.

They started to dash out, only to land in the arms of a stout, shabbily-dressed man.

"Not so fast, young fellows," said the man, holding them tight. "Where are you going in such a hurry, and what's the row?"

At that moment the doorway was filled by Starbeam and Orchard, with McCue and Craig behind.

The man who held the boys suddenly released his grip on them and turned his attention to the others, whom he recognized in the dim light.

To Bob and Billy's surprise, he whipped out a revolver and said in a swift tone:

"Throw up your hands, the four of you. You're under arrest."

The man in the yard was Detective Watson.

With his left hand he pulled a whistle from his vest pocket and blew a shrill blast.

Craig and his associates were aghast, while the rest of the crowd fell back in dismay, piling over one another in their eagerness to regain the barroom.

Two policemen came vaulting over the fence to the detective's assistance, while two others appeared at the front door of the saloon and prevented any one from leaving.

Craig and McCue took advantage of their position behind Starbeam and Orchard to dart back into the saloon and try to escape that way.

They soon found that such a move was useless.

Watson paid no further attention to the boys, but Bob, recognizing him as the detective in disguise, spoke to him.

"Mr. Watson, I am Bob Barron, and this is my assistant."

"I wouldn't have known you, young man," said the detective, lowering his revolver as the two policemen slipped handcuffs on the unresisting wrists of Starbeam and Orchard, who, recognizing that the game was up, yielded without a struggle.

"We'll look after these men while you chase Craig and McCue," said Bob.

"They can't get away," replied Watson. "I have men in front."

"Gee! That's fine!" cried Billy, enthusiastically. "You'll bag the whole four."

"I expect to," replied the detective. "It was a lucky thing you left that note for me at the station, Barron. You put me on to a hot scent, and one I've been looking for since I got on the case. I guess we've got these chaps dead to rights this time."

"I've overheard enough to send them to State's prison, if I could only prove it," said Bob.

"We'll prove it somehow, if we have to work the third degree on them to make one of them turn State's evidence. Stay here with one of the officers while I get the other two."

The detective and the other policeman entered the now deserted passage and made their way to the barroom, where the crowd was huddled together, unable to get out at the front door.

While the patrolman remained at the entrance to the passage, Watson pushed his way through the mob, looking for Craig and McCue.

Neither was in the room.

The detective spoke to one of the officers at the door and was assured that no one had passed out.

The detective then looked around the saloon, and saw the door leading off it.

He found that it communicated with a narrow hall and a staircase running up to the floor above.

Calling two of the policemen to his aid, they rushed upstairs and searched the rooms.

An open window leading on a low roof suggested how Craig and his companion had made their escape.

The detective sent one of the policemen to tell the officer in charge of the prisoners, in the back yard, to take them to the station house.

The other policemen were ordered to follow the detective.

Bob and Billy thus learned that Craig and McCue had escaped.

"Gee! That's too bad," said Billy.

"It's to be hoped that they won't get clear off," said Bob, in a tone of disappointment.

"What are we going to do now?"

"There's nothing more for us to do but go back to the factory, wash up, put on our clothes and go home. Come on."

So back to the canning establishment they went and were admitted by the watchman, whom Bob had previously notified to be on the lookout for them.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE FACTORY.

"We had quite a strenuous time of it to-night, you, especially," remarked Billy, while they were resuming their ordinary garments.

"That's what we did."

"So those chaps were planning to burn this place down before daylight, eh?"

"Yes, that was their purpose; but it's knocked in the head now."

"Craig and McCue will have to leave town now to avoid arrest."

"They will, of course, if they can get away."

"Craig seems to be the biggest rascal of the three, though I don't see much choice."

"He's got as much nerve as the three put together, if not more. I believe he intended to put me out of the way for good the way I heard him speak in that little room when McCue had me cornered."

"I turned up just in time to help you out, didn't I?"

"You did, Billy, and I'm mighty thankful you were so prompt. Well, are you ready?"

"All ready."

"Then put out the gas."

The gas was put out and they were preparing to leave when Billy found that he had dropped his pack of cigarettes in the closet or somewhere else.

"I'll look up the watchman and you'll find me near the gate, Billy," said Bob.

"All right. I'll lock the door," and Billy continued to grope for the missing cigarettes.

Bob walked into the yard to find the watchman to let them out.

He found him sitting on the steps of the engine house, and they walked together to the gate.

While Bob was giving him a rapid sketch of what had happened that night at the saloon, two forms crept toward them in the gloom.

Suddenly each received a heavy blow on the head that stretched them on the ground.

Bob was dazed by the crack, while the watchman was knocked out completely.

"Who is this chap with the watchman?" asked the voice of McCue.

Craig flashed a match and then uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"It's Bob Barron," he said.

"So it is," said McCue. "Then Billy Davis can't be a great way off."

"Never mind. Drag the watchman away from the gate. I'll attend to this lad," said Craig, grabbing Bob and raising him in his arms.

As soon as McCue rejoined him he said to Craig:

"What will we do to this fellow, now that we've got him in our power?"

"Take him into the cellar and let him go up with the building."

"I'm willin'. It will serve him right for queerin' us, as he has done. But for him me and the boys would be a thousand dollars in pocket, and nary a soul be the wiser of how we earned it. Now, Jim and Jude are in jail, and all we've got to look for is revenge."

"There is something more than revenge, McCue. You will get your thousand if the others don't. The men who are backing me will have to ante up when the time comes, or I'd squeal on them, and that would spell ruin for them."

"But how am I goin' to get my share when we'll have to slip out of town the moment we've set the factory afire?"

"There'll be enough money sent on to me for me to square with you and have a good wad over. Then we can part company, each going his own way."

"That suits me," replied McCue.

While they were speaking they were crossing the yard toward the engine house, where there was a side door that afforded entrance to the employees of the factory.

Bob was recovering his senses, and he heard every word they said.

As a matter of prudence he gave no indication that he had recovered from the effects of the cowardly blow he had received, for he was fast in Craig's grip and could not help himself with any hope of success.

McCue had a key for the door, which he had no doubt obtained for a purpose before his discharge, and he opened up and they passed into the building with their prisoner.

"If we could only break into the office safe now," said the rascal, "we could hook all the ready cash on hand."

"Don't talk nonsense," replied Craig, impatiently. "We couldn't open the safe to save our lives. There's probably not much money in it, anyway, as it was always my custom to deposit all of the receipts but the petty cash in the bank every afternoon, and the new cashier no doubt follows the same plan."

"Well, follow me. This is the way to the cellar. The sooner we get the work over the better."

The cellar was soon reached, and Craig laid Bob down.

Flashing a match, he looked at the boy.

Bob continued to simulate insensibility, and the ex-cashier was deceived.

"He's good for an hour or more," he said. "And long before that he'll be burned to a crisp."

"We'd better tie him to one of these posts to make sure of him," said McCue.

"It isn't necessary. If his body was found tied it would look like a murder, and if we were caught, and the firing of this building brought home to us, we'd be up against the hangman, and I'm not anxious to take that risk."

Neither was McCue, and Craig's argument silenced him.

They proceeded to gather materials, in which the cellar abounded, to start bonfires in different parts of the place.

The factory was a large wooden structure, the floor beams of which rested on the stone walls of the cellar.

Two or three good fires started down there would soon communicate with the floor above, and by the time the blaze came to be noticed from the outside, and the alarm brought the fire department to the spot, the interior of the building would be a glowing mass of fire.

That's the way the two rascals figured it out, and there was good ground for their belief.

They worked under the light of a gas-jet turned low, and took occasional glances at Bob, who was considering how he could defeat their project and at the same time get away himself.

He wondered what Billy would do when he didn't find him at the gate.

No doubt he would wait a reasonable time and then go on a hunt for him and the watchman.

Bob knew that Brown had been knocked out, and if Billy

found his senseless body he would suspect foul play at once and do something.

Just what Billy would do in such an emergency he couldn't say.

They worked steadily at their dastardly employment, and in twenty minutes had collected three big piles of inflammable material such as they calculated would answer their purpose.

All being ready to apply a light, McCue rolled up an old newspaper in the form of a torch and approached the gas-jet.

He stood with his back to Bob, and the boy realized that the moment had come when he must act, and act with lightning quickness.

The butt of a revolver protruded from McCue's pocket and Bob's eye caught sight of it.

Springing to his feet as lightly as a cat, he darted at the rascal, seized and possessed himself of the weapon, and then grasping it by the barrel, struck the ruffian a terrible blow on the forehead as he turned around.

McCue went down like a stricken ox in the shambles, and never moved a muscle afterward, while the ignited torch slowly burned toward his hand.

Craig heard the crash of his companion's fall, turned around and faced Bob.

For a moment he stood petrified with surprise and consternation, then, not noticing the weapon in the boy's hand, he sprang at him with a terrible imprecation.

To save himself, Bob raised the revolver and fired.

Craig fell forward on his face and lay quite still.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

"I hope I haven't killed him," muttered Bob, with a thrill. "I had to shoot, for in another moment he'd have been on me."

He turned the ex-cashier over.

His face was bathed in blood, flowing from an ugly wound across the scalp.

Bob examined the course of the bullet and was satisfied that the wound was hardly a dangerous one, though Craig might not recover consciousness for hours.

"They're both in my power now, and I've saved the factory," he breathed, with a feeling of great satisfaction. "Now to notify the police, or perhaps it would be better for me to telephone Mr. Waters first and ask for instructions."

He decided to do the latter, and leaving things as they were, he rushed upstairs and made his way to the office.

He got connection with Mr. Waters after some delay, for it was now after midnight, and he recognized his employer's voice at the other end of the wire inquiring who was there.

"It is I, Bob Barron."

Mr. Waters uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"What's the trouble, Bob?"

"An attempt has been made to fire the factory by Craig and McCue. I spoiled their game. I am now at the office. You had better dress and come down right away. I suppose I'd better notify the police. Or shall I wait for you?"

"Wait for me. I'll come down right away."

Bob hung up the receiver and then returned to the cellar to take a look at the two rascals.

He knew it would be some little time before Mr. Waters could reach the office.

McCue and Craig lay where they had fallen.

There was a lump over the former's eye as big almost as a hen's egg.

"I must have hit him a terrible blow," thought Bob. "I meant business when I struck at him, for my only hope lay in doing him up at the first crack. Well, he deserves all he got, and I hope he'll get all that's coming to him, and the same applies to Craig, whose proper home is in the State prison. By the way, I wonder what Billy is doing? I forgot all about him."

Bob left the cellar and went into the yard.

There was no sign of Billy anywhere.

Bob called to him, without result.

Then he looked about for the watchman.

He found him stretched out unconscious near a pile of lumber.

At that moment he heard a noise in the alley.

Then a figure, followed by others, came scrambling over the fence.

They came toward him and he saw three policemen, headed by Billy.

"That you, Billy?" he said.

"Why, hello, Bob, where the dickens have you been?" ejaculated Billy, in surprise.

"In the soup—almost."

"What do you mean?"

"Wait till we see if Brown can be brought to his senses, then I'll explain all."

The policemen carried the night watchman over to a pump and put his head under it, while one of them poured some brandy down his throat.

This treatment presently resulted in the man's return to consciousness.

Brown could not tell what had knocked him out, but Bob was able to furnish that information.

He further stated all the facts connected with the attempt to burn the building that the reader is already acquainted with.

Then he led all hands to the cellar and showed them the wounded and senseless rascals, and the three piles of broken wood, and paper, and excelsior that would have made a fine beginning for a conflagration had they once been ignited.

One of the policemen went upstairs to the office, communicated with the station by telephone, and asked that a patrol wagon be sent to the factory at once.

Before the wagon got there Mr. Waters arrived, and he was not a little startled at the sight which the cellar presented.

After Bob had repeated his story to him, including the adventure he and Billy had met with at Beckley's saloon, the manufacturer seized his young shipping clerk by the hand and thanked him warmly.

"You have saved the factory this night by your pluck, Bob," he said, "just as you saved it from being blown up last week by your nerve in venturing out to that old house in order to discover what game Craig and my three em-

ployees were up to. You are certainly an uncommon boy, and you are making a great record for yourself."

The patrol wagon now came up and the unconscious prisoners were carried away to the station house, where they were revived and locked up in cells.

Bob, Billy and Mr. Waters then returned to their homes.

Bob had hardly gotten into bed before there was a loud ring at the front door bell.

He slipped on his trousers and went down to see who the late caller was, for it was now half-past one in the morning.

He found it was a bright young reporter from the "Millgate Journal" who, having picked up such facts of the attempted firing of the Waters factory as appeared on the police blotter, had called to get a fuller story from Bob himself.

The boy obligingly narrated all the particulars of the case, and also told him about what had occurred at Beckley's saloon before and after the detective and the policemen arrived.

Next morning the "Journal" had a graphic story of the night's events skillfully written up by the young reporter, who gave Bob full credit for saving the factory, and complimented him on his remarkable pluck.

Of course this story was read by all the employees of the canning establishment before they reached the factory, and Bob found himself quite a hero that day.

Bob was the chief witness at the examination of the four prisoners in the police court, and though all naturally pleaded not guilty, the evidence against them was easily sufficient to cause the magistrate to hold them—Craig and McCue as principals and Orchard and Starbeam as accomplices.

Mr. Waters figured up that Bob had saved not only his building, but his business, which would have been badly disrupted had the establishment been destroyed.

As this was the second time the boy had rendered so signal a service to him, and as he had almost lost his life in defense of his employer's interests, the manufacturer determined to reward him handsomely.

So he called Bob into his office, and after thanking him again for what he had done, presented him with a check for \$5,000.

The amount nearly took the young shipping clerk's breath away.

It looked like a small fortune to him, as indeed it was.

Mr. Waters also assured him that he regarded him as one of his most valued employees, and would take care to advance him in the business as fast as possible.

Before the trial of the conspirators came on, both Orchard and Starbeam made a clean breast of the whole business, and they were accepted as witnesses by the prosecu-

tion, under an agreement that they were to be sent to jail for a nominal time.

Craig and McCue were easily convicted and received the full penalty for their offenses, which was twenty years' imprisonment at hard labor in the penitentiary.

Although the striking employees of the canning houses eventually had to give up the fight, and as many of them went back to work as the proprietors could employ, for under no circumstances would the bosses discharge the new hands, the rival establishments lost a great deal of trade, and money as well, before they got into full running shape again.

During the continuance of the strike Mr. Waters had to work his people nearly every night, and he got so much new trade, which he was able to hold on to, that he put up an addition to the factory, and hired most of the late strikers at a five per cent. advance as were left out in the cold.

Bob moved into an enlarged shipping and packing department, with two additional assistants, and his pay was raised to \$20 a week.

Subsequently he was made assistant to the managing clerk, while Billy was promoted to the post of shipping clerk.

The demands of his increasing business compelled Mr. Waters to create the position of general superintendent of the manufacturing end of the concern, and Bob got the job at \$30 per week.

By this time he was Jessie Wiseman's most devoted admirer and steady company, and though they were not actually engaged, it looked as if they would make a match of it.

At any rate, her parents looked on him as a remarkably good catch, for he was not only making good money, and saving a large part of his earnings for the future, but there appeared to be some probability that he would get an interest in the business after a time, for Mr. Waters had come to look upon him as his right-hand man—a boy who was making a splendid record for himself.

THE END.

Read "A FIGHT FOR MONEY; OR, FROM SCHOOL TO WALL STREET," which will be the next number (114) of "Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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Fame and Fortune Weekly

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 29, 1907.

Terms to Subscribers.

Single Copies.....	.05 Cents
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GOOD STORIES.

Much of the beauty of the stars depends upon their scintillation. The multitudinous flashing of their tiny rays gives a wonderful life and brilliance to a winter's night. The great star, Sirius, excites the most admiration when, near the horizon, it coruscates with rainbow hues. But the astronomer would be glad if he could put a stop to the scintillation of the stars. That unsteadiness of their light is one of the chief obstacles he has to overcome in studying them with the telescope.

Scintillation has generally been regarded as due only to slight disturbances in the atmosphere. But, as recent observations have shown that red stars scintillate less than white ones, it has been suggested that the causes for some of the essential differences in the scintillations of different stars may be in the stars themselves. There is no doubt, however, that the main cause of scintillation depends upon the condition of the air.

Most people suppose that when the stars appear to lose their liveliness of light, and shine without twinkling, as minute, bright points in the sky, fair weather is in prospect. Studies lately made in this country seem to contradict this popular belief. It has been found that when the stars are feeble in their scintillations, foul weather is at hand. The night before a most violent storm in the south, for instance, the stars hung so quietly in the sky that they seemed to have entirely lost their scintillating power.

This is said to be only one instance among many which show that an unusual steadiness in the light of the stars precedes the appearance of storms.

King Menelik has caused a start to be made on the second section of the Abyssinian Railway, and a host of men are engaged in preparing the track for the rails, says the *Glasgow Herald*. No one European Power claims, at present, a privileged position in the Ethiopian kingdom, and all protest their respect for its independence and the open door of commerce. Germany, which is sending over a remarkable expedition to Abyssinia, says that equality of commercial opportunity is all that she desires, while King Menelik is prepared to welcome the attention of all the Powers, concludes the *Herald*.

A Paris newspaper announces the departure of a commercial mission to Abyssinia, organized by the French Government and carrying a collection of samples forwarded by the various French chambers of commerce.

Some interesting experiments with reference to the nutritive value of foods containing sugar were recently made at the instance of the War Office at Berlin.

It is a fact, well known to Alpine tourists, that on difficult climbing excursions an increased desire is felt for sweets and sweetened foods, and many who never touch such things at home devour large quantities of them on these tours. It is

also frequently remarked that the guides eagerly appropriate any sugar that may be left over, and consume it on the journey. Whether the sugar afforded real benefit to the mountain climber was the subject of the German investigation; that is, did the consumption of sugar render the tired muscles capable of renewed exertion?

To answer the question conclusively, the subject of the experiment was not allowed to know that a test was being made. One day a sweet liquid, containing thirty grams of sugar, was administered; on the next a similar liquid, sweetened by saccharin to render it indistinguishable from the other, as far as taste was concerned, took the place of the sugar.

The result was a complete triumph for the sugar. It was found that a greater amount of work could be accomplished on the days when the sugar was given than on those when saccharin took its place. This serves, as far as it goes, to prove that sugar is food in a true sense, and that it is, in particular, food for the muscles.

In the wide central window of a doctor's office which is located on the second floor of a building in a Western city the reflection of two tall tombstones may be seen regularly for several hours each afternoon. The doctor's name appears prominently in white letters across the pane, and at each end of it rises a tall, white stone just as they stand beside the doorway of a stonecutter's shop half a block away.

JOKES AND JESTS.

The record of a man who swallowed a fork years ago has been beaten by an exhibitor at French fairs, who was in the habit of putting down bits of glass and metal for the bewilderment of the spectators. This marvellous regimen seemed to agree with him until lately, when he became morose and lost his appetite for the sort of food with which his fellow creatures are wont to regale themselves. So he went one day to the hospital, and Prof. Paul Berger, having no difficulty in guessing the cause of the trouble, was very much interested in the case, but hesitated to operate, as he feared that this might make matters worse. As a crisis was evidently impending, however, the professor decided on running the risk. An incision was made in the patient's stomach, and from it were removed a fork, bent in twain, a buttonhook, three gimlets, 140 nails, an enormous number of pins, and last, not least, a couple of steel chains, the whole lot weighing 330 grammes, and showing by their condition that they had sojourned long in the interior of the exhibitor at fairs, who bore the operation extremely well and has rapidly mended ever since.

Representative Lorimer, of Chicago, who is a great walker, was recently out for a tramp along the conduit road leading from Washington, when after going a few miles he sat down to rest. "Want a lift, mister?" asked a good-natured Maryland farmer driving that way. "Thank you," responded Mr. Lorimer, "I will avail myself of your kind offer." The two rode in silence for a while. Presently the teamster asked: "Professional man?" "Yes," answered Lorimer, who was thinking of a bill he had pending before the House. After another long pause the farmer observed: "Say, you ain't a lawyer or you'd be talking; you ain't a doctor, 'cause you ain't got no satchel, and you shore ain't a preacher, from the looks of you. What is your profession, anyhow?" "I am a politician," replied Lorimer. The Marylander gave a snort of disgust. "Politics ain't no profession; politics is a disorder."

"Now," said Miss Yerner, "you'd better go up and speak to papa." "Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Slokoche, who had finally proposed, "is he up yet?" "Yes, he's waiting for you in the sitting-room, unless he's got tired and gone to bed."

THE GREEN JASPER RING

By John Sherman.

"What business have you striking a man old enough to be your grandfather? Take that, and let him alone!"

The voice was low rather than loud, and it was evidently that of a youth suddenly aroused to unrestrainable indignation.

The words were followed by the noise of a blow, quick as thought, and by no means light.

Then there were an apparently smothered execration, hurrying feet, followed by a slower and firmer tread, and immediately afterward only the ordinary sounds of a commonly quiet locality.

Harlem bridge was but a few blocks behind me, and I was on the point of turning from Third avenue into a cross street when I heard what I have just recorded.

It was a still, moonlight evening, and as I rounded the corner I saw three figures.

The first was scudding along like a dark phantom in the shadow of the trees which bordered one sidewalk; and he was rapidly disappearing.

The second was on the opposite side, and he was vanishing more swiftly in the obscurity of the shaded pavement.

Neither was clearly distinguishable.

The third was a very elderly gentleman, bent and gray, and he was obviously in a state of dazed perturbation; he was coming, step by step, more closely toward me.

As we approached each other, I stopped; at the same time I could not help giving utterance to an exclamation of surprise and curiosity.

I recognized him as a Mr. Simon Bolton—a wholesale merchant with a large downtown establishment.

He lived in a fine, old-fashioned house a few doors away, and was just returning home from business.

"What's up, Mr. Bolton?" I inquired, with a familiarity warranted by several years' acquaintance.

"By all that's lucky! is that you?" he returned, more in remark to the evidence of his eyes than ears, for the old gentleman was extremely deaf.

"It is myself, and none other."

"You have happened along in the nick of time. I have just been assaulted and robbed."

"Who were your assailants?"

The old gentleman had no suspicion as to his or their identity.

He had been walking leisurely along when he felt an arm about his neck and a hand like a vise clutching his throat.

The vise-like clutch deprived him of any power to move or think clearly.

He knew some other person ran hurriedly across the street, and that a blow had been dealt.

But he was under the impression that the two were confederates, and that the blow was but a pretense designed to confuse his mind and render pursuit more ineffectual.

Anyway, his pockets had been rifled in a lightning flash.

A roll of bills had been taken, and also a forged check.

The forged check bore what purported to be his signature, had been duly cashed at the bank for a considerable amount, and he had secured it by assuming the responsibility of the deficit.

At my suggestion we walked back to the spot where the assault and robbery had been committed.

It was at a point midway between two distant street lamps, and, being in the shadow of the bordering trees, was gloomy in the extreme.

The light of my ready bull's-eye lantern, however, obviated the difficulty of darkness.

I hoped that in the struggle the assailant or assailants might have dropped something which would afford a clue, however slight.

My hopes were not disappointed.

Our thorough search of the spot was rewarded by finding a seal ring—a small oblong of green jasper set in solid gold.

The oblong of jasper was carved in an intaglio—a miniature pine with a serpent's head for the trunk.

At sight of the ring, a triumphant ejaculation burst from Mr. Bolton's lips.

"I place the clue and the case in your hands," said he. "That ring is an heirloom in the Malloy family. The older Malloy is one of my trusted accountants. He has a son—Mort—who as a penman is a marvel."

"What am I to infer from that?"

"The inference is plain enough. It was not my money the scoundrel who assaulted me wanted; it was the forged check."

"Ah, I see."

"Young Mort Malloy is the forger. He had discovered in some way that I have taken up the check. He knew if he could get hold of it and destroy it, he need not fear much of a case being made out against him."

"Why should he have leagued himself with an accomplice? It strikes me he would be too clever to do that if he is as cunning a villain as you suppose."

"I am so certain my suspicions are right, that I shall make a charge against him at once."

As the old gentleman spoke, he had halted under a street lamp to inspect more minutely his rifled pockets.

"The young scamp has taken with the rest a letter which I had not yet read. It was important, too. It was from the head of our branch house in London, and contained information in regard to the financial standing of the gentleman whom I should wish to see my daughter's husband. The writer was on the eve of starting for Australia, and I may not hear from him again in some time."

How important a part that letter was to play in the evidence for and against young Mort Malloy, neither of us guessed at the moment.

I had no difficulty in finding the young man.

In fact, I met him the very next morning before the entrance of a large book-binding establishment where he was employed.

He was just going to work, and he looked rather impatient when I stopped him.

"I shall be docked if I am late. Can you not let your business wait until the dinner hour?" he said.

He was scarcely more than a youth; he had a round, beardless face; his brown eyes had a merry, honest look; his manner was frank and manly.

"Is this ring yours?" I asked, as I held the green jasper intaglio before him.

He admitted readily that it was.

"Do you remember where you lost it?"

"Of course I do; I lost it last evening in a cross street near Harlem Bridge. A tall young chap was choking an old gentleman, and I interfered. In the scuffle the ring must have been torn from my finger."

"You knew the old gentleman was Mr. Bolton?"

"At the moment of the attack I did not. In an instant afterward, though, I saw he was the father of—of—"

The young fellow hesitated, and his boyish face colored like that of a school girl.

"The father of a very pretty young lady with whom you had been walking a few moments before," said I.

"I don't know what business you have to catechise me, nor where you got your information, but I am not afraid to admit the latter is correct."

I had made a few investigations the previous evening, and I had ascertained that a romantic attachment existed between the accused young book-binder and Mr. Bolton's only daughter.

I had learned, too, that the father had no suspicion of the existing state of affairs.

But I let the subject drop, and returned to that of the assault.

"I should think you would have collared Mr. Bolton's assailant, and handed him over to the police."

"He was too much for me; he stopped the scuffle by running away. I pursued him, but it was no use."

"What was he like?"

"He was very tall and muscular; he was dark as a mulatto; his eyebrows were so dark and heavy, I had a notion they were

false. He wore a broad felt hat, and a short cape over his coat."

"How far did you follow him?"

"Until he jumped into a light buggy and drove away. I knew the horse."

"You did?"

"It was a little spotted brown and white beast, kept for hire in a livery stable up the Boulevard."

At this crisis of our conversation, I had decided that Mort Malloy was innocent of the crime imputed to him by his father's employer.

I agreed with Mr. Bolton, however, in his opinion that the forged check had been the object of the assault.

As I ceased questioning Mort he thrust his hands in his pockets, and turned as if to hurry inside to his work.

As he did so, it would seem one hand must have come in contact with an unfamiliar article.

For at the instant he suddenly jerked something forth, stared at it, and then whirled abruptly back to me.

He looked the picture of dumb amazement.

What he had jerked forth were a letter and a small roll of bills.

I reached for them, and he handed them over without the slightest hesitation.

The letter bore the London post-mark, and was addressed to Mr. Simon Bolton. The bills bore a certain mark, which the old gentleman had mentioned to me, and which stamped them unmistakably as the stolen money.

"The mulatto-looking chap must have stuffed them in my pocket during the scuffle," said Mort, looking the picture of consternation.

What I thought did not matter. Under the circumstances it was my duty to take the young fellow into custody.

My next move was to start for the livery stable up the Boulevard, where a certain brown and white-spotted horse was kept for hire.

I had turned into a parallel avenue a block away, when I noticed an elegantly attired young gentleman walking some distance ahead of me.

I recognized him as the young Englishman whom Mr. Bolton had selected as the future husband of the pretty only daughter.

He had been welcomed in society as the younger son of a titled family; he was known as the Marquis Clarence St. Clair; and he was reputed to be enormously wealthy.

I smiled as I thought of the letter which had been found so strangely in the young book-binder's pocket that very morning, and which was now reposing snugly in one of my own.

I had delivered that letter to Mr. Bolton about three hours before; and the old gentleman had nearly strangled with wrath when he read it.

But I was not shadowing the Marquis St. Clair at the moment.

I was on the trail of the mulatto-looking chap whom Mr. Bolton believed to be the young book-binder's accomplice.

I had already learned that the forged check had been presented at the bank by an individual of his description—dark, tall, muscular, and wearing a broad felt hat, with a short cape over his coat.

This man without a doubt was the real forger.

To track him to his hiding-place, to unmask his identity, was the only way to save young Mort Malloy.

As I walked on, carelessly eyeing the elegant marquis just ahead, he sauntered up to the stable yard connected with one of the small hotels which abound in that locality.

A groom appeared and took his order for a saddle horse; evidently it was his intention to enjoy a canter down the avenue which was just beginning to fill with equestrians and brilliant equipages.

At that moment a coarsely-dressed man who had been loitering across the street, turned and walked up to him:

I had approached so closely that as I stood sheltered by an angle of the building, I could hear their words and see the expression of their countenances.

As the man spoke I could have tossed my hat in the air with a rousing cheer at my intense satisfaction.

I knew that handsome, innocent Mort Malloy was saved.

"There's no use denying nothing," said the man; "you're the chap who hired the spotted horse at our place over there, and we want our pay for the broken wagon."

The elegant Marquis St. Clair attempted an air of haughty astonishment.

"It's no use; you are the man, and a fine scoundrel, so I'm thinking! You left what's dead against you over there," repeated the other, jerking a thumb in the direction of the livery stable in the Boulevard.

"You are mistaken in my person, my good fellow," St. Clair returned, haughtily.

"I ain't mistaken about the false eyebrows you left in the buggy, nor how you washed the mulatto black from your fine phiz in the horse bucket when you thought nobody looking. But your tricks and slying away won't save you from paying damages. The hat and cape you left won't pay, I reckon. Just hand over twenty-five dollars, or I'll call an officer."

I stepped from behind the angle of the building.

"An officer is here. I want this man for forgery and assault," I said, as I slipped the iron bracelets over his elegantly-gloved hands.

The charge was fully proven against him.

As the letter to Mr. Bolton had revealed, he was a notorious impostor and adventurer.

He had never before, however, been convicted of any heinous offense.

But he had overmatched his own cunning when he slipped Mr. Bolton's money and stolen letter into brave young Mort's pockets.

But for that dastardly trick to incriminate an innocent man, he might have escaped detection and ultimately married Mr. Bolton's daughter.

The handsome young book-binder was speedily released, and Mr. Bolton was agreeably surprised when he learned the whole truth of the affair.

He had always liked Mort, whom he now regarded as a much wronged hero.

Eventually he consented to a marriage between the brave young fellow and his pretty daughter.

And so ends the strange case with its false clue of the green jasper ring.

The data collected in 1900, and now for the first time published, show that of 23,485,000 women over sixteen years of age, more than one-fifth, or upward of 4,833,000, were bread-winners, of whom only 1,124,000 were domestic servants. The proportion of feminine white wage-earners, both of whose parents were born in this country, was less than 15 per cent. The proportion of white women paid-workers, one or both of whose parents were native born, was 37 per cent. The native white workers, both of whose parents were born abroad, represented more than 22 per cent.; the white women workers who themselves were foreign born, more than 17 per cent.; the negro native-born women, 22 per cent. As compared with the Census of 1880, the number of women bread-winners in 1900 had increased by more than 100 per cent., an increase which, of course, can be only partially ascribed to the expansion of population during the two intervening decades. Obviously, the number of occupations open to women had been augmented signally during the interval.

The lapidary was skinning a pearl, according to the *Philadelphia Record*. He had on gloves of a very delicate sort of kid, and the glasses that he wore had lenses of such great magnifying power that his eyes, through them, looked as big as saucers. "I wear gloves," he said, "because the hands perspire freely in this work, and perspiration has often been known to discolor pearls. This stone was injured by the accidental dropping on it of some acid. The disaster discolored it, you see. With this very delicate little tool I am removing its outer skin, and if I find that the acid has filtered through and discolored the inner skin also, I may remove that as well. A pearl, you see, is composed of eccentric layers, or skins, and you can, if you are a clever workman, peel it down and down until it disappears."

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